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THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT FOR TO-DAY

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT FOR TO-DAY

BY THE REV.

T. H. WRIGHT

SCOTS CHURCH, PARIS

AUTHOR OF "THE FINGER OF GOD" "THE SHRINE OF FAITH" "OPEN ROADS OF THOUGHT" ETC.

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TO

MY WIFE

FINELLA GUTHRIE

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PREFACE

Is the Sermon on the Mount practical? Does it apply to actual life as men and nations experience it? These questions, in various tones, became insurgent during the Great War, which challenged all that was customary in Christian thought. Conventional replies to the questions fell flat as Jericho's walls. Some devout persons confessed with sorrow and bewilderment that they found little guidance in the Sermon, and others waxed wrathful when confronted by its ideals. Many, in the stress of emotion natural to the time, were confused, and, while anathematizing the supposed philosophy of Nietzsche, adopted his most antichristian maxims.

In the troubles since the War, the relevance of the Sermon to the practical issues of life has been discerned by the few, sharply questioned or bitterly denied by the many. The gage of battle thus thrown down before the Christian ideal has been welcomed. The tragedy of war purges the soul by pity and terror, and the sufferings that follow are as the painful but hopeful climbing of the cleansing Mount after the horrors of the Inferno.

It will be strange if no fresh insight into the thought and purpose of the Divine Teacher emerges from this catastrophic rending of the human heart.

The most vital need of the present time is to discover the actual mind of Jesus and the deep principles of life which He enunciates. To place ourselves at the standpoint of those who record these teachings is important for all who would know the New Testament, but it is only the preliminary to something of deeper consequence. The tendency among some modern expositors to reduce the value of these sayings to the level and measure of those who first received and taught them produces a most discouraging sense of baldness and mediocrity. Any exposition which excludes, of set purpose or by neglect, the honest attempt to reach the actual thought and consciousness of the Teacher, bleeds the Sermon to inanition. To affiliate the truth expressed by Jesus with the sporadic inspirations of earlier thinkers, with earlier extra-Biblical writers and later Jewish reflectors, is fascinating, as it is to trace the plots of Shakespeare's plays to his predecessors, but to speak in any vital sense of "sources" for either Shakespeare or Jesus is to trifle with language. Genius may receive suggestions from many human springs, but its radiant inspiration is all its own, derived from immediate relations with Reality. To inquire what the Parables of the Kingdom meant to the Evangelists is a proper study for all serious people, but to suggest that the disciples' range of vision

was the measure of the Divine Master's outlook is preposterous.

The endeavour here, therefore, has been to arrive at the meaning of the Speaker, and to show its validity for the most urgent issues of the present. The attempt has intensified the conviction that, in the Sermon, we have the veritable thoughts of the Divine in the human and the human in the Divine. Jesus knew and loved God and man in the same act of thought, and with one emotion and passion. And therefore we possess as a supreme treasure the highest moral and spiritual discernment achieved by any human life, and also, the very Word of the Eternal, which not even the imperfections and insensibilities of the reporters are able to obscure. That conviction carries with it its own reminder of the greatness of any would-be interpreter's task, and of the deep inadequacy of the present example.

"Yet will I nowise shrink; but at Love's shrine
Myself, within the beams his brow doth dart,
Will set the flashing jewel of thy heart
In that dull chamber where it deigns to shine:
For lo! in honour of thine excellencies
My heart takes pride to show how poor it is."

T. H. W.

PARIS 1927.

"THE moral and spiritual idealism of Jesus, while indefinitely higher than that of any of the philosophers or prophets before Him, has nothing strained or restless, nothing rootless or quietistic, nothing querulous or disdainful, or of caste or sect about it: the humblest manual labour, the simplest of the human relations, the universal elemental faculties of man as man, are all entered into and developed, are all hallowed in smallest detail, and step by step."

BARON FRIEDRICH VON HÜGEL,
The Mystical Element in Religion.

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PART I

ON THE THRESHOLD

Chapter I. A Sermon of the Mount: Prologue.
„ II. The Approach to the Sermon.
„ III. Jesus and Apocalyptic Expectations.
„ IV. The Two Versions.

CHAPTER I

A SERMON OF THE MOUNT: PROLOGUE

"Seeing the multitudes, Jesus went up into a mountain: and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him: and He taught them."—MATT. v. 1, 2; cf. LUKE vi. 12–20.

THE attempt to localize a discourse of Jesus on some particular eminence of Galilee—Karn Hattin, or some other hill or range of elevated country, some plain or level place at a lower part of the hill—is a vain toil even if successful. The endeavour to interpret a Sermon *of* the Mount is a fruitful labour even if it largely fail. These sayings of the Lord of Life belong to the Height. They have left the plain far below, not so much in distance as in moral atmosphere. The hill breezes of the Spirit blow around them, bearing fragrance not of earth. The mountain winds of holy passion sweep from them, surprising the smug complacency of low levels. The sense of the Highest pervades them.

The Man of Nazareth was not always on the same level of emotion. Least of all was He perpetually on the ecstatic plane. He took His place quite naturally among everyday duties and ordinary people, and all He did and said was marked by sane, shrewd, genial observation of nature and of men. His life has equipoise, and therefore strength. But the idealism of the impassioned seer is never far away, and reveals itself in frequent upheaving of these spiritual tides which ran quick and full in His nature. The impulse to get away from the

narrow range of existence, and into the wider spaces of thought and emotion, was irresistible. The gentle hills round Nazareth, the solitary place, the wilderness, the sea, the mountain, were often an escape from hostility, from the feeling of a coming fate, and a liberation of His intensity into the larger outlook, the freer communion, the new endowment. In days of conflict and crisis, when He sought for His cause a way of future promise, He went up into a mountain to pray, to think, to choose His successors.

The instinct for the height was native to His soul. The ascent to the mountain air was symbolic of His entire spirit of continual aspiration. Jesus stands upon the mount of faith in God and man, and tells the world what He sees. He declares a vision and utters a prophecy. He was lifted above the world, but does not forget the world. He still beholds the lower levels of existence, and the height gives the vantage-ground for seeing them truly. The lofty ideal never unfits for practical problems, or diminishes sympathy for human conflict. The noblest of the Mystics have come forth from high contemplation of spiritual realities, joyous, exalted, radiant, to spend themselves in lowliest service. On the Mount of rapture and ineffable communion, Jesus was rebaptized for the Cross. When Raphael painted "The Transfiguration" he represented the multitude of sorrowing, bewildered people at the foot of the Mount, with the epileptic boy in the midst, as an essential part, as it truly was, of that mysterious experience. And it was when Jesus saw the multitudes, as sheep having no shepherd, that He went up into the mountain to teach.

From the height of His spirit He saw the life of man in its true proportions: the littleness, the childishness, the futility of much that men esteemed most highly, and yet the "bright shoots of everlastingness," the

promise of a nobler destiny. In the Divine light He beheld both the abjectness and the splendour of the Race. His vision swept beyond all narrow horizons, and while the glory of the present thrilled His heart, the greater glory of the world-to-be unrolled itself before His soul. And ever, the right preparation for hearing the exalted strains of these sayings is a will to ascend to the higher levels of life with Him. Without that, we shall be content to test these great utterances by the low-pitched standards of an unromantic practicality. Only on the Mount does Jesus verily open His mouth and teach men.

CHAPTER II

THE APPROACH TO THE SERMON

THE questions as to how this body of Christian teaching took its rise, how it has been transmitted through the centuries, and under what circumstances and influences it has diverged to its present forms are somewhat complex, and of great importance for its right interpretation. Yet no facts can come to light as to its historical career which can affect its intrinsic value. Here it stands for the whole world to appraise and explore. It carries in itself its essential authority, winning ever more commanding force as men see its meaning, and its congruity with all that is most enlightened in the modern instinct and understanding. Present-day scholars do not question that these are substantially the sayings of Jesus, and the fact greatly enhances their fascination. Yet their deepest authority resides in the perennial appeal they make to reason and conscience.

New Testament scholars possess this religious teaching as a Greek translation of an Aramaic original. The average reader has it as one of many renderings into his own tongue of the Greek. Also, frequent indications appear that those who have transmitted the sayings, first by many streams of oral tradition and then by more or less fragmentary writings, have not been concerned, or able, to prevent considerable changes in its form and emphasis. Moreover, the two versions of Matthew and Luke present striking differences in the

letter if not in the spirit. These facts impose a necessity to interpret the teaching so recorded, not in any meticulous insistence on the actual words, but grasping the essential idea and the gracious temper of the whole. Here, as elsewhere, the letter killeth, the spirit giveth life.

The facts that lie on the surface do not suggest that this teaching was spoken as it stands as a set discourse, but rather that some such address, more or less formal, has been supplemented by material from other occasions, and the whole concentrated in these three chapters of Matthew's Gospel, and in the shorter form of Luke. A large part of the whole might well be the substance of an address delivered on some epoch-making occasion in the mental and spiritual history of those who heard. In the passage concerning our Lord's relation to the Jewish Law, for example, one idea is expressed, the thought is clear and connected, expanded and illustrated, and the hearers would be able at once to grasp the main intention. Other parts are less closely held together, they are more compact in form and enigmatic in idea. The Beatitudes, in particular, are so concisely expressed, so delicately balanced, that they would be unsuitable as the exordium of a spoken discourse. Their emphasis on commonly despised qualities, declaring these to be the chief causes of blessedness, would distract the mind by their wide call to virtue and by their challenge to prejudice. The whole teaching, covering in about twenty minutes the whole range of Christian obligation, would offend against the elementary requirements of effective discourse. We are told that Emerson in his lectures used to deliver some of his startling oracles very deliberately and delicately. He seemed frequently to wait for the next thought to be given by some familiar spirit, some dainty Ariel, and when he received it he welcomed it as a newborn idea of great moment, and

then carefully dropped it, almost distilled it, as a precious heaven-sent gift to his audience. So he gave a chance for the more nimble-minded of his listeners to grasp the suggestion before his swift genius darted away to other founts of brilliant fancy, to dip its gauzy wings in other wells of inspiration. And He who spoke as never man spoke had not less but more sense of the fitness of things. We may regard the Sermon as a brief summary of the truths which Jesus repeated, expanded, illustrated, and enforced on the memory in the course of frequent instruction.

A discerning reader of the Sermon can scarcely miss the sense of urgency which sounds through all its varied tones. And if the main body of the teaching comes from the middle portion of His brief years of ministry, then His intense desire to impress His disciples with His moral and spiritual ideal, before the fatal stroke should fall upon Him from the enmity of the religious leaders of His land, is sufficient to account for that urgent note. But along with that sense, one is also conscious of a serene calmness, as of one who cannot be unduly disturbed by the most serpentine enmity because He spoke of the eternal truths in which He habitually dwelt.

The impression first made by the Sermon has been recorded as one of fresh conviction in contrast with the pedantic routine of the Jewish official teachers. "He taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes." The sayings are mentally and morally adventurous, not to be confined within the bounds of a feeble conventionality. Its confident initiative, based upon a great trust in the All-pervading Beneficence and in Man, the child of God, is the most complete expression of this spiritual daring. Nothing is commonplace or otiose, but fresh, alert, vital, deeply reverent to sacred tradition yet in no kind of bondage to it. In spite

of the fact that we are reading a translation of a translation, a Divine gift of spiritual expression in the Speaker is disclosed. Jesus was a genius, not less so because so much more. The whole is greater than its parts, but there is need at times to see the parts which the whole includes. And the whole of that personality of Jesus includes an astonishing genius, even as men speak of those aptitudes that nothing in heredity, education, or environment can account for; discernments and intuitions due to the uprising of that submerged consciousness which is common to all men but which these exceptional personalities are alone able to exercise and organize. From this comprehensive genius, never separated from its Source, arose a most arresting manner of speech, the qualities of which only the deadening influence of custom can hide from us. The teaching abounds in surprises. Apparent simplicities break into deepest vitalities; seeming innocence of life's stern realities startles one with its close relation to actuality; an amazing sanity conjoined with practical revolutionary force; daring exaggeration compelling thought to seek until it finds the essential truth. All along the way, customary paths open up into rare places of wonder and delight, old duty is illumined with new visions of God.

The fact is not yet sufficiently realized that thirty years of unique experience went to shape these convictions and to quicken and clarify that insight. There is nothing here of inevitable wisdom, demanding no mental and spiritual toil. Hard and holy thinking comes here to fruition. The Speaker had wrestled, in sequestered places of the spirit, with the needs of men and the grace of God. He had personally discovered the fitness of the one for the other, and had learned to so adjust them that the Divine could have its perfect way with the human. He had passed through a signal crisis in inward

development, and been baptized into a spiritual enhancement of all His powers. From that baptism He had gone forth with eager hope to win the world by truth, meekness, and righteousness, and in that brave enterprise He had known the trials, if not the disillusionment, of actual contact with the hard religiosity of the Jewish Church ; had seen, to the dismay of His ardent spirit, what scribe and Pharisee had made of the religion and law of God. He had been terrified in His soul, to which the Divine secrets lay so bare, by that spiritual deadness and the pretence which vainly sought to hide it ; compelled to fall back on the fundamental instinct of man for truth and goodness, that capacity which He knew at its fullest and noblest in Himself. Within the compass of humanity He attained to that union with the Deity which was His eternal birthright, and upon which depended the security of His tenure in all realms of excellence and wisdom. On that human yet Divine level He remained the Father's well-beloved Son, and there too He became the inseparable brother of Man, hoping sublimely for the best, never despairing of the worst.

CHAPTER III

JESUS AND APOCALYPTIC EXPECTATIONS

THE question of environment is always important in considering any personality, and not less so in understanding our Lord. The background of that Jewish life in which He lived must be taken into account, and all the more because so many scholars maintain that the expectations which were current in His day not only affected the records of His teaching, but fashioned the mental fabric of the Teacher Himself. The very terms He used in the Sermon are construed in the lurid light of Apocalypse.

We may then recall that Jesus grew to manhood in an age of great mental disturbance and ferment. The times were out of joint. All parties in the State "show their defects strongly in fierce antagonisms and morbid exaggerations." [1] The Greek domination and tyranny had left scars in the national memory. Roman contempt, pressing on their entire life, humiliated all that was proudest and most sacred in their sensibilities. The pathetic strains of the Psalms of Solomon (70–40 B.C.) reflect their shame and desperation and trembling faith in the century before the Advent. In the trial the Hebrew hope was tortured, and it warped in the process. Many lost their Jewish identity. Those who remained faithful became more separatist than ever. They only kept their hearts alive, either

[1] Montefiore, *Hibbert Lectures*, 1892.

in devout confidence, or in fierce fanaticism, by the expectation of some vast intervention of Almighty Power, more or less spectacular, such as was predicted by some of their prophets, or by the writers known as Apocalyptic. The earlier of the Hebrew prophets anticipate a Day of God, a time of startling Divine manifestation and of judgment. But they mostly expect the event to befall from human agency under the Almighty hand, or they see the visitation as the natural outcome of their national perversity. In later prophets, in Joel and particularly in Daniel, prognostications of signs and wonders in heaven and earth are not wanting, and these less convincing elements of the prophetic outlook are enormously extended by the Apocalyptists. The Book of Daniel, to encourage the struggling Hebrews of Maccabæan days, predicts a new Kingdom which shall be essentially humane and of heavenly origin (coming on the clouds), in contrast to kingdoms rapacious, bestial, and of earthly origin (coming up from the sea). The central figure of the vision is " one like unto a son of man." The apocalyptic Books of Enoch and 2 Esdras change this into a Messianic person, the Son of Man, and build upon it conceptions of Messianic power unknown to the Old Testament. These writers in general forsake the saner and more religious conceptions of the prophets, and think instead of a wholly transcendent Deity far removed from all intercourse with men, only coming to them in supernatural action through the intermediation of a hierarchy of angels, for whom unearthly spheres of existence are mapped out, providing full range for the writers' uncontrolled mental caprice. These writings contain ideas and discernments which show that the Jewish nation was not stagnant during the two hundred years between the last of the prophets and the Advent. But they also

contain monstrous masses of pure fantasy, unregulated by either fact or reason. The various books are far from being consistent with each other or with themselves, but they agree in claiming supernatural revelation for the national saint or hero under whose name they are, for politic reasons, set forth, and in declaring the finality and universality of the Jewish Law and the unique pre-eminence of the Jewish nation. In spite of these claims they present a pessimistic outlook on the national destiny. The earlier hopes of Israel's triumph had not been realized. New factors had made their political prospects more unpromising than ever. And so their strained imagination and overcharged passion found relief in thinking of a coming intervention of super-natural power, under the impression of which they cease to dwell on the moral preparation for the revelation.

The most valuable and permanent element in the apocalyptic hope was the assurance of a goal to which the Divine purpose was leading. This was in line with the prophets' aspiration, and with it Jesus was ardently in sympathy. But the study of the Gospels makes plain that He was deeply averse to the exaggerated legalism of the Apocalyptics, and to their externalizing of the national expectation. The Apocryphal Gospels reveal the "psychological climate" which prevailed before, during, and after our Lord's career. They show that His generation was saturated with the idea that signs and wonders must accompany any great event of Divine providence, and support prophetic authority. Two facts are clear: that Jesus was at great pains to repudiate the thaumaturgic spirit, and that He found it extremely hard to eradicate it. Apocalyptic ideas found their opportunity in these Jewish prepossessions. Yet the lower and realistic anticipations were constantly opposed by higher and more spiritual conceptions which

were especially current in the circles in which Jesus moved. While the Zealot mind moved towards a violent issue, the Quietist rival, less obtrusive, but no less stubborn and tenacious, held to the patient waiting for the Divine will. Among the more substantial elements of the nation, the supreme enthusiasm was not for national revenge or political freedom, but for the triumph of their religion. They had in mind a spiritual Kingdom, and with this enthusiasm Jesus was in full concord, to it He made His appeal. By revealing Himself as the Lord of that Kingdom He firmly established a new meaning to the Messianic idea and expectation.

In reading the Sermon, and the New Testament generally, while these deeper spiritual elements are remembered, account must be taken of the more outwardly active mental atmosphere. The disciples and the Early Church were certainly influenced by it, and would be inclined to turn the spiritual conceptions of the Master into these inferior channels of idea. What Jesus meant symbolically they would be apt to read literally. The earlier apostolic letters show that they looked for a speedy return of Jesus, with great convulsions of nature and political transformation. But when these particular expectations were unrealized, their deeper religious conceptions survived the shock and poured their strength into more verifiable convictions. How far did our Lord share these anticipations which the disciples and apostles had to outgrow ?

The Gospels as they stand attribute apocalyptic language to Him, and all three Synoptics record, in differing form but with much identity of both form and substance, a considerable body of predictions which are difficult to reconcile with each other and with the general thought of Jesus. Reading these predictions broadly, a dual outlook is traceable. One vision looks

toward the impending fall of Jerusalem, which was to Him the inevitable outcome of existing conditions, while being no less a Divine judgment. The other contemplates a speedy return of the Son of Man in power and glory to gather together the elect and to accomplish their redemption. It surely must be obvious that in the nature of the case such a body of sayings would be specially subject to the vicissitudes of memory and variety of interpretation, according to personal preferences or to the tradition current in the several circles. To dismiss these declarations as due to the reporters' imagination is as unwarranted as to make them the vital part of all our Lord's teaching. Both these extreme views have been, and are, held.

On the one hand, distinguished scholars regard these predictions as no part of the teaching of Jesus. They are additions made by Jewish Christians who were full of apocalyptic ideas, or they are taken from a separate work, a Jewish Christian apocalypse of the first century, and woven with a short exhortation in which Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem. This view goes beyond any unconscious colouring the words may have acquired in the teaching and preaching of them, or in transmission. It denies any share of Jesus in them, on the ground of their fundamental incongruity with His general teaching.

On the other hand, a school has arisen which declares that these predictions express the main thought and enthusiasm of Jesus. He was, they say, a thorough Jew, and shared the national expectation. Towards the end of His life He was carried away by the current excitement. In all His teaching He has no thought beyond the present and the near future. Both He and His teaching were made by His environment. His counsels are patronized as beautiful and delightfully

unworldly, but only suitable to the simple primitive folk of Galilee, and for the brief space before the expected end. Certain hard sayings of Jesus are overpressed into service, such as the injunctions to hate father and mother, to take no anxious thought for the future, to abandon all personal possessions. Such prosaic interpretations are given of these as make them absurd for any time, however short, and for any emergency, however urgent. As if shortness of time could make any reason for a man to be meek or humble or self-sacrificing, or make the literal call to forsake wife and children or hate father and mother to be anything but inhuman. These interpretations ignore the underlying principle of these hard sayings which alone makes them fitting for pressing and passing emergencies, and which makes them gloriously inspiring for all permanent requirements.

The leading exponent of the theory that the whole of Jesus' teaching was conceived under the overmastering sense of imminent catastrophe, that it was all "interim ethik," temporary expedient, is Albert Schweitzer. In his fascinating review of critical opinion regarding the historical Jesus [1] he hails Johannes Weiss as establishing once for all that Jesus taught nothing and claimed nothing which was not wholly future. His idea of the Kingdom of God, His Messianic claim, belong entirely to the eschatological. Weiss admits that Jesus made use of the traditional apocalyptic idea with modesty, restraint, and sobriety. The transcendent Kingdom for which He looked had nothing to do with raising a revolution. But it appears that Weiss regards it as having no more to do with the character of living men, for he declares that the teaching of Jesus was not so much an ethic as a penitential discipline in preparation

[1] Von Reimarus zu Wrede, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. Eng. trans.

for a Kingdom which had no ethical ideals, which was only for the future. The chief virtue of Weiss, according to Schweitzer, was that "he did away with all qualifying clauses in the interpretation of Jesus. All was now to be either eschatological or non-eschatological." But the consciousness of Jesus as revealed in the Gospels has a delicacy and an elusiveness which do not lend themselves to such clean-cut finality. Summary treatment is apt to remove the aura of mystery which surrounds all deep spiritual realities. Something less drastic and more sympathetic is required to interpret Jesus in His attempt to commend these truths of life to minds fashioned by current Jewish materialism.

The thoughts of Jesus would naturally bear some impression of the experience which He shared with His fellow-countrymen. He had not been exempt from the yoke of tyranny and contempt which they endured. And when His own last ordeal approached, and He felt himself gripped in an unnatural alliance of a degenerate Judaism and a callous Roman imperialism, His ardent faith and hope might well discern the material for an imminent Divine judgment. But it was no Jewish victory He expected, no Zealot triumph of retaliation, but a Divine operation which should bring about a new beginning, not for Jews alone but for all mankind, a new valuation of life and duty, in a recreated sense of God. Exaltation of spirit, under Divine control and illumination, was not foreign to Him. In moments of lofty intuition He beheld virtue and vice in their contrasted issues of permanence and perdition, and He was supremely confident, through all the shrinking of His flesh, that nothing on earth or under the earth could withstand the Holy Will. But He also saw that the only way to that victory which should consummate the ages was through sacrifice, and He willingly crowned

His faith by enduring a shameful death as of Divine ordering.

The Sermon on the Mount must be interpreted in this light rather than in the slow beams of an unimaginative mentality. Jesus was a seer of spiritual reality. He spoke not as a maker of philosophic systems, but as a Saviour. And when He used the imagery of current expectations it was because He lived so near to the heart of man as well as near to the heart of God. In trying to implant His living idea in the race He felt the danger of being baffled by Jewish materialism, and so it was His constant principle to base upon some truth which underlay even erroneous convictions. Here He builds on the conviction of a righteous goal which even the most extravagant apocalyptic cherished. The imagery " was used according to prophetic precedent by One whom we believe to have been more spiritual than any Hebrew prophet." [1] Imagery was native to His poetic spirit, but all was bathed in that spiritual thought which wholly absorbed Him.

The general sayings of our Lord, even making no allowance for colouring by the reporters, are conspicuously free from apocalyptic bias, and many of them are anti-catastrophic. The forecast expressed in them is normal and natural. Although the scientific idea of evolution was not yet brought forth, He laid deep stress on the natural working of spiritual forces. His mental pictures are of the seed bringing forth of itself—first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear ; the tiny mustard seed growing into a sheltering tree ; the hidden leaven slowly but surely working its way until the whole is leavened. Schweitzer spends much energy in trying to demonstrate that Jesus had no thought, in these parables, of any germ, present in small

[1] Dr. E. A. Abbott, *The Son of Man.*

beginnings, working out to a great issue. He will not have it that Jesus ever thought of founding a Kingdom to begin on the earth. He knew, I suppose, that such an admission would destroy his entire argument. No. "The eschatological insight of Johannes Weiss made an end of the modern view that Jesus founded the Kingdom of God. It was not Jesus, nor the Baptist, who were working at the coming of the Kingdom." Yet Schweitzer says later that "in the movement to which the Baptist gave the first impulse and which still continues, there was an initial fact which was drawing after it the coming of the Kingdom, in a fashion which was miraculous, unintelligible, but unfailingly certain, since the sufficient cause for it lay in the power and purpose of God." But in the discernment of that purpose and the development even of the Baptist's impulse, Jesus must, *ex hypothesi*, have no share. Must we not say that for conclusions which claim to be final, such arguments are singularly inconclusive? The actuality of the Rule of God in the soul of Jesus and His faithful followers, animated by that Divine power and purpose, cannot be suppressed by any such *force majeure*. It is idle to maintain that Jesus did not think of the Kingdom as already actual in faithful souls, and His religion as a present process in human experience, which His parables set forth. They repeat constantly, in face of the undisciplined predictions of His time, the need of patience. They warn of the long tarrying of the Kingdom, which would demand reserves of inward resource, "oil in the vessels along with the lamps." And the counsel was reinforced by the whole spirit of the life. In Jesus there was nothing of fevered haste, such as might have been expected in one so ardent and so intimately under the sense of the shortness of life's opportunity. He went quietly about doing good, teaching the higher and better

life, with a calmness and apparent unaggressiveness that was a serious stumbling-block to His fiery forerunner who expected a swift and final dealing with the crying evils of that day.

Wilhelm Bousset, in his reply to the argument of Johannes Weiss, maintains that the exclusive emphasis on eschatology allows the essential originality and power of the personality of Jesus to slip through its fingers, and grasps instead contemporary conceptions, which, though important, are less essential. The deep sense in Jesus of the Fatherhood of God, His frank joy in life and in this world, His sanity of judgment regarding earthly goods, which are not to be renounced but subordinated, are all an inner negation of the Jewish eschatology. What appears in Him to be eschatological teaching is essentially the old prophetic teaching with its positive ethical emphasis. On the same lines may be added the fundamental belief of Jesus in human nature, revealed most conclusively in the Sermon. "A pessimism which sees no hope in the earthly process, teaching which is purely and exclusively world-renouncing (Schweitzer) are not consistent with the purely religious relation to God which could not do otherwise than transform, from within outwards, the traditional conceptions, even though they seem to be traceable in their actual contemporary form on the surface of His teaching." [1]

When Jesus spoke of His return to earth with power He left the interpretation of His words to experience under that Spirit which should guide into all truth. Of times and seasons He gave no indication. Some signal manifestations of Divine power and glory He anticipated —in the Fall of Jerusalem and probably beyond that catastrophe—manifestations in which He Himself would

[1] Wendt, *Lehre Jesu.*

be gloriously present; but the day and the hour of these events are known only to the Father. Jesus spoke with confidence of His continued life and rule in His Kingdom, and the Fourth Evangelist regards this as fulfilled by His continual spiritual presence with His people. If the writer of the Gospel can make this distinction between material and spiritual revelation cannot the Lord of Life? To Him whose personality was to be at the root of all human progress the Kingdom was to come not in outward events, not with observation, but invisibly and inwardly. "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you." In the Beatitudes, men are called to a manifold virtue and blessedness which is to constitute them members of the Kingdom. The connection between the virtue and the blessing was vital to His whole thought. He looked for no good to come to mankind apart from their preparation for it. The tendency of apocalyptic was to lay such weight on the mass deliverance that the need for individual moral fitness was overlooked. But Jesus, when He dwells most on decisive issues in the future, more than ever urges the necessity of deep moral readiness. His watchwords are: "Take heed to yourselves—watch—pray—endure." The main emphasis in His mind was on the present duty and opportunity and their tremendous issues. His parables receive their finest interpretation when the futurist explanation is subordinated if not abolished. They are His counsels for life here and now. At the same time, the present always leads on to the future. Reformers are compelled, by the force of their conviction and the ardour of their enthusiasm, to see life in prophetical perspective. In times of striking success, a grander prospect opens before the exultant imagination. In days when the present is discouraging, relief is found in visions of future victory. Jesus

combined in His consciousness the intensive insight of the present spiritual working of the Kingdom, with the extensive prospect of the future consummation. And thus the need is taken away of regarding His sayings as provisional suggestions for human conduct in a world rushing to speedy ruin. Jesus spoke directly to His own time and His own people. Because He spoke so deep humanly and so true Divinely, His word is valid for all times and all people. And if frank study leads any to believe that in some respects He gave what was immediately counsel for that generation, the greater the need of discovering the spirit of His words which is not for an age but for all time, the Truth which is eternal.

CHAPTER IV

THE TWO VERSIONS

The most casual inspection of the reports of the Sermon given by the Gospels of Matthew and Luke reveals considerable differences in the substance of the versions. The third Gospel omits whole sections which are prominent in St. Matthew, and gives a good deal of it in other settings apart from his own version of the Sermon. And a closer examination discovers what appears to be a difference of spirit in the Beatitudes which presents a baffling problem to the interpreter. But these variations must be considered as part of a wider variation between the whole Gospels.

The differences between the Gospels according to St. Matthew and St. Luke are due to the personal standpoint of the authors, the destination of the writings, and the divergences in the sources available to each ; and by these not working consciously and separately, but unconsciously and indivisibly. To allow for these impelling influences is of more importance than to trace, if it were possible, the why and whence and wherefore of particular elements in each version. The invaluable, and also endless, researches and discussions of Synoptic problems seem to make certain that the author of the Gospel we call St. Matthew's wrote for Jewish Christians, and reflects the feelings and hopes of Palestinian Jews, with whom he was in association and whose conflict with a corrupted Pharisaism he shared.

The writing is marked by a conspicuous anti-Pharisaic tendency, not found in either Mark or Luke. It is written in Greek, (1) translating material given in a collection of sayings or "Logia" of Jesus, probably brought together by Matthew the disciple, and which is so much the main substance of our present Matthew that this Gospel rightly bears his name; and (2) using the earliest of the Gospels, that of Mark. The author was himself a Jew, with all a Jew's traditions and enthusiasms, which centred on their national history and destiny, and disposed to select from his material those elements which glorify the Jewish race and law, and to make the most and best of them, while also cherishing with true insight the new spiritual interpretation disclosed by the Master of truth. His main concern was to present Jesus as the true Messiah of prophetic hope, but also, because He was the predestined One in spiritual reality, as the Founder and Lord of a better and larger Kingdom than that of Jewish expectation. His outlook was not free of the national limitation, but he looked for a new Israel, into the privilege and blessing of which aliens from far and wide would enter. "He wishes to show that in spite of the contemporary rupture between Judaism and Christianity there has been a Divine continuity realized in the origin and issues of faith in Jesus as the Christ." [1] The whole writing is dominated from first to last with the idea of the Kingdom of the Heavens, a phrase which occurs more than thirty times in this Gospel, and with Jesus as the King. The Gospel opens with John the Forerunner as the royal herald; the closing words of Jesus are commands of royal authority; and embedded in the whole is this Sermon, which bears throughout the same commanding spirit.

The author of the third Gospel, St. Luke, was a

[1] Moffatt, *Int. to N.T.*, "Matthew's Gospel."

Greek, and wrote mainly for Gentile readers. His work reflects the broader conceptions of Christianity current among these Christians of whom Theophilus was probably a prominent member, and with whom Luke the physician was intimate. He drew his material, as he tells us in his prologue, from various sources: from the original collection of Matthæan Logia, either directly or through our St. Matthew; from Mark's Gospel; and from other sources which must be assumed, but which are not easily traced or defined. Certain features of his writing suggest, as one of these sources, a collection of our Lord's parables and other teaching made by some one, in full sympathy with the universalistic spirit of Paul the apostle of the Gentiles, who had very specially apprehended the boundless graciousness of the Master. Some one like to Luke would be suitable to make the collection, why not he who had "exactly traced all things from the very first"? Other phenomena seem to demand other material derived from the Jewish society in Palestine, perhaps in Jerusalem, which was at that time suffering from the tyrannic animosity of the wealthy and worldly Sadducees. The tone of the Gospel at times suggests an exaggeration of emphasis due to this antagonism, which takes the place of Matthew's anti-Pharisaic tendency. Also traces of the popular Jewish idea of the last things appear in this Gospel, which is fundamentally the least Jewish writing in the New Testament, traces which are foreign to the manifest spirit of the author and which may very well have been drawn from such a Palestinian source. Other fragmentary writings or oral traditions might account for briefer sayings of Jesus which only Luke gives, and he certainly had the literary skill, not inferior to that of St. Matthew, though of a different order, to combine the various material into a consistent and attractive narrative, which led

Renan to call this Gospel the most beautiful book in the world, and which is eternally true to the deepest spirit of Jesus.

In contrast to the signal emphasis on the Kingdom of the Heavens found in Matthew, Luke seldom uses the phrase or the conception. When he cannot avoid it because it is in the source which he is following, he alters the expression to the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom. The idea of the Heavenly Kingdom, which we can naturally interpret spiritually as the order of life which is dominated by thoughts and principles derived from the higher realms of existence, was, at first, a Jewish idea, and in reporting the parables, Luke finds no necessity to affiliate them with this conception. Not once does he use the refrain so insistent in Matthew, "the Kingdom of heaven is like." The parables have, in fact, a far wider scope than Jewish history and hopes, being pictures of the working of religion among men, and Luke makes this prominent and truly winsome, representing the social enthusiasm of Jesus, which was so vital a part of His spirit. In the eighteen parables which Luke alone gives, the atmosphere is broadly human and Christian, dealing with principles which any man of any race can appreciate.

The Gentile destination of this Gospel would account for most of its omissions. The limitation of Christ's mission to the Jews and the express exclusion of Samaritans and Gentiles (Matt. x. 3–6), though not necessarily meaning more than an essential concentration of His work, is quite omitted by Luke, and also the beautiful narrative of the Syrophœnician woman. Both of these might easily be misinterpreted by recent Gentile converts. Out of regard also to his Gentile readers, and perhaps because it made little appeal to himself, Luke naturally omits the section of the Sermon which discloses

the attitude of Jesus to the Jewish Law, although this constitutes the nucleus of Matthew's version and was probably the main theme of the Sermon. This explanation has been repudiated, and the position maintained that Gentiles had the keenest interest in all that pertained to Jewish customs and to their Law. But to explain the omission of this important passage, recourse has to be made to some supposed shorter form of Matthew's Logia which did not contain it.[1] Documents are sometimes assumed with the sublime ease with which a new plane of existence is assumed by the theosophists.

In this connection matters of literary style are of importance. " Matthew " shows the writer's desire and manifest skill to arrange his material in good workmanlike fashion so as to produce a comprehensive massive effect in true correspondence with the grandeur of its theme and the sublimity of the Personality there enshrined. He has been well styled a literary architect, and his work stands as a worthy product of spiritual genius. " The successive paragraphs have a comprehensive sweep which unfolds the leading idea in the author's mind, even when it ignores the historical perspective of the subject. It is this constructive literary power which characterizes Matthew among the synoptics." [2] The primary purpose is to present in their greatness the sayings of the Lord, and secondarily His doings. No concern is felt about giving the actual setting of the sayings, but only to make an impressive grouping of them according to their subject.

On the other hand, Luke does aim at giving an orderly account of the events of our Lord's life. He claims to have taken pains to get accurate information on the Christian tradition, and he sometimes appears

[1] A. Wright, article on St. Luke's Gospel in Hastings' *D.C.G.*
[2] Moffatt, *Int. to N.T.*, " Matthew's Gospel."

to place parts of the teaching in their original circumstance. At other times he fails, and accepts an emotional connection rather than an historical. A keen dramatic sense also claims a part in his writing. He loves to give vividness to his story by recording conversations. The predilection of Matthew for groups may be paralleled by Luke's liking for contrasts. He who gives the startling contrasts between the blessings and the woes in the Beatitudes also presents, over against each other, God and Satan, Dives and Lazarus, Martha and Mary, the ungrateful Jewish lepers and the grateful Samaritan, the heartless priest and Levite and the compassionate heretic, the publican and the Pharisee, the sinful, repentant woman and the churlish host, the prodigal and the elder brother, the penitent and the impenitent thief. The main enemies of the Gospel, according to Luke, are not Jewish formalism and hypocrisy, but the temptations of wealth and social position—which he is easily inclined to over-emphasize—and the perils of half-heartedness in the converts to Christianity, leading to apostasy. So he makes the Christian demand more strenuous than the other evangelists. Prayer with him must be earnest to the point of importunity. The warning against regarding earthly family ties more than the Christian cause becomes a call for hatred of parents, wife, and children. He alone records our Lord's solemn declaration that no man who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the Kingdom of God. The tendency to give a greater stringency to the already solemn warnings against the perils of riches has left a deep mark on this Gospel. Mark softens the difficulty of rich men becoming Christian by adding "those who trust in riches," but Luke leaves it unmitigated. In his Gospel rich and poor become almost synonymous with wicked and pious. Some trace this

tendency to the Ebionite disparagement and renunciation of all worldly possessions which he may have contracted by contact with the sect. Or he may have found it in one or other of his sources. His experience of the wealthy Sadducees may help to explain the tendency. But, although Luke is deeply aware of the perils of the time, he is no pessimist. Like the other synoptics, he forecasts the troubles, of which Jesus spoke, coming on the Jewish nation with catastrophic suddenness and horror, yet he has more hope to express in and through it all than any other evangelist. His version sets a term to the troubles and gives the assurance that not a hair of their head shall be injured. He sees a moral purpose to be accomplished by means of the fiery trial. In patience let them possess their souls and become worthy to stand before the Son of Man. The ultimate issue of the disasters was not their destruction but their salvation—" When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads ; for your redemption draweth nigh." And it is to St. Luke we owe the most cherished treasure of the synoptics, in the matchless parables and incidents which he alone records, and which give immortal fragrance to his pages, and lead us in reverent gratitude to the feet of the Father-God. The realization of their unique truth and beauty compels us to take for granted some invaluable source to which this evangelist had access, and in which he revelled. One can understand Matthew and even Mark not being enthusiastically devoted to this side of our Lord's teaching, and being slow to understand His indiscriminating action towards those other than Jews and other than good. But one cannot understand them, if they possessed these rare narratives, leaving no trace in their Gospels of these great pronouncements of Divine charity.

These considerations which help to account for the variations between the two versions of the Gospels will go far to explain the omissions and changes in St. Luke's version of the Sermon, and to relieve the stress of contrast in the double form of the Beatitudes.

PART II

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER IN BEATITUDE

Matt. v. 1–12 ; Luke vi. 17–26.

Chapter V. The Enthusiasm of Virtue.
„ VI. The Blessing of the Humble.
„ VII. The Comfort of the Mourners.
„ VIII. The Heritage of the Meek.
„ IX. Spiritual Hunger and Thirst.
„ X. The Benediction on the Merciful.
„ XI. The Pure-Hearted.
„ XII. The Affinities of the Peacemaker.
„ XIII. The Reward of the Persecuted.
„ XIV. The Beneficent Activity of the Beatitude Spirit.

CHAPTER V

THE ENTHUSIASM OF VIRTUE

THE differences between the first and third Gospels appear in their most startling form in the Beatitudes, where they present a peculiar problem. Many explanations of this diversity have been attempted, but none can claim finality. Matthew gives eight Beatitudes, six of which speak of virtues which are to be positively sought and cultivated, made room for in the scheme of life. They represent a gleaming ideal of the spirit. The blessings on the mourner and the persecuted stand in a different category, for they celebrate no definite virtue. It is not fitting to ask God to incline our hearts to be mourners or persecuted. Of Matthew's eight, Luke only records the blessing on four, and so changes the form that it is no longer clear that any of them refer to virtues of the spirit. They are simply the poor, the hungry, the mourners, the persecuted. And this evangelist adds a series of corresponding woes upon those who are rich, those who are full, those who laugh now, those of whom all men speak well. While Matthew gives the blessings in the third person, Luke gives them in the second. The Speaker seems to apostrophize classes of men who may or may not be present, as though His vision is sweeping over the actual condition of society as He knew it. This style of address is found in Matthew only in an expansion of the last Beatitude, where it suggests a

personal application to those who listened to Him. Also Luke emphasizes that some of the experiences which He has in mind were only temporary, and the blessing which He declares upon them is a coming reversal of the experience. They hunger now, weep now. But a better time is at hand, when these conditions shall be exchanged for fulness and laughter. The suggestion clearly is that some great transformation is expected which shall give relief to their present hardship and sorrow, while those who are now living in ease and fulness and self-complacency will suffer a reversal of their conditions.

These differences cannot be lightly regarded. As they stand, they cannot both have been spoken on the same occasion. The alternatives are that they were either spoken separately, or that a process of change has been at work on one or both of them. The supposition of two addressed on separate occasions, which some still advocate, does not help, for the difference of spirit, which is the most serious variation, would still require explanation. A process resulting in diversions from the original is not far to seek. The changes might come about naturally through the preachers who transmitted the teaching and made it part of the Christian tradition. They would feel the need of giving prominence to the aspects of their message which would appeal most directly to those they addressed, whether they were Jews or Gentiles, orthodox Hebrews or heterodox Ebionites. And later, the compilers or writers of the Gospels would as naturally make selections from the materials before them or in their personal knowledge, according to the requirements of those for whom they wrote, the method of composition they followed, and the direction of their own mental movement.

It is widely believed among scholars that the original

form of these four sayings was : Blessed are ye poor—ye mourners—ye hungry—ye persecuted. Hebrews like Matthew and his Jewish-Christian circle would naturally interpret them in a spiritual sense, and expand them accordingly as poor in spirit, hungry for righteousness, persecuted for righteousness' sake, thus making the blessedness to be primarily in their own inward life. We may well accept them as such, assured that they are true to the spirit of the Speaker. On the other hand, it is maintained by many that Luke interpreted the first two of his Beatitudes in the material sense, referring them to poverty of circumstance and to bodily hunger and thirst, and then contrasted them, in the woes that he alone gives, with material riches and fulness of worldly luxury, thus departing widely from Matthew, either because of his social sympathies which are undoubted, or from some supposed affinities of temper with the Ebionites in their notorious repudiation and condemnation of all material wealth. The apparent divergence in spirit from Matthew is most of all due to the contrasted woes which give the colour to the whole. Concerning these, the only certain fact is that they are either substantially the words of Jesus or an addition to His teaching made by the Church or the evangelist. The interpretation to be put on these woes will differ according to what known spirit or degree of moral and spiritual culture they represent. If they are the outcome of popular Christian sentiment in the first century, they may well be taken as a debasement of the original conception by that generation which was so slow to apprehend the lofty idealism of Jesus. Or they may be rather an expansion by the preachers who felt the necessity, in teaching converts from a corrupt Paganism, of unfolding the moral implications of those gracious promises to those who rejected or were unfaithful to

them. Some men in all generations cannot discern the glory of the best except in the lurid light cast by the worst.

On the other hand, a far more spiritual meaning will be attached to these woes if they are regarded as veritable utterances of Jesus. After speaking with glowing spirit on the unmeasured blessings to be realized in themselves by those morally fitted to receive them, He might naturally be poignantly moved by the thought of those who were so desperately unfitted for any spiritual blessing, and who were therefore outside, exposed to the corrupting forces with which they were affiliated. With this quite opposite moral world in view, He apostrophizes the rich and warns them, not because they were wealthy, but because they had allowed their wealth to make them arrogant and selfish ; the full, because their fulness had bred the carelessness of those who were rich and increased with goods and had need of nothing ; the laughers, not because they were gay and merry, but because their laughter was of those who cannot discern the meaning and issues of life ; those who were popular, not because they were general favourites by their geniality and broad human sympathy, but because they gave themselves freely to every phase of life, irrespective of its moral quality. These countless numbers who lived without regard for God or man were receiving their consolation, such as it was, but the time would come when their resources, being external, would be of no avail, and when their awakened need and the consequent hunger of soul would be devastating. This outburst of human emotion, with pity as its dominant note, at the vision of souls exposed to such impoverishment and calamity, is far more in harmony with the appeal which in Luke follows it for charity and forbearance even towards enemies, than the " vehement de-

nunciation of prosperous and proud folk" which some read into it. In this circle of woes there is nothing necessarily of a catastrophic character; all is just the natural working out of moral disaster everywhere and at all times. Over-emphasis of the thrice-repeated "now" has led to the idea that "the fundamental thought of Luke is that no satisfaction will be got in the present age, such are its contradictions and oppressive manners."[1] But does the evangelist, in this case, represent anything in the spirit of Jesus? Does he even express what was most characteristic of himself? for belief in humanity runs profoundly through his Gospel, and he is plainly not a pessimist.

It must also not be forgotten that many scholars regard Matthew's form of the Beatitudes as original and authentic, not only for their more spiritual version of our Lord's thought, but as having the authority of one who heard the discourse and preserved at least the spirit of it. The diverse form of Luke's sermon is due to his intense ascetic spirit, or to his readaptation of the original to serve the practical purpose of Christian instruction. One of the strongest facts in favour of the originality of Matthew's version is its congruity with other Beatitudes of Jesus recorded in the Gospels and in other writings, all of which trace the blessedness to the quality of conviction or of virtue within them and manifested in action.[2] In Luke's version as it stands, the connection of the blessing with any moral quality is obscured if not entirely lost. In Matthew this connection is the fundamental feature.

Jesus speaks of the virtues here in a style which must have been startling to His hearers and which still

[1] Dr. Moffatt, article on "Sermon on the Mount," *Ency. Brit.*

[2] Matt. xi. 6, xiii. 16, xvi. 17; Luke xi. 28, xii. 37; John xiii. 17, xx. 9; Acts xx. 35.

remains surprising. For the ambitions of the Jews these virtues were of no avail. The types of person spoken of and the blessings assigned were familiar and recognized by all pious Jews. But the qualities they regarded as essential for their national triumph must be made of sterner stuff. Fiery ardour, impatience of oppression, zeal for liberty, heroic self-forgetfulness, of such was the Kingdom the Jewish patriot burned to realize. But this unusual note of enthusiasm is heard in celebration of these little-regarded qualities. Jesus passes by the terms for which the Greek word for happiness, *εὐδαιμονία*, could be used, and requires a word closely associated with the blessedness of the gods, a far stronger and more ideal word, *μακάριος*. Aristotle uses the word for Divine blessedness in contrast with human happiness. "With him the *μακάριος*, as opposed to *ἐνδεής*, is he who lacks no good." [1] Jesus ennobles the word still further by compelling its use to express a deep happiness not determined by fortune in wealth or education, but due to an inward condition through a right relation to God. "Since the word 'blessed' fell from the lips of Jesus, His Beatitudes have worthily set forth an idea of character loftier than the aristocratic virtue of the Platonists, a joy unknown to the most noble-minded of the pleasure-seeking Epicureans, a satisfaction of soul beyond the reach of the self-sufficient Stoic." [2] He proclaims a wonderful joy and peace beyond all ordinary measures, and becomes lyrical in praise of the virtues which qualify for the blessing.

The Beatitudes may rightly be understood as carefully treasured and delicately inculcated thought upon life, which was given first, given frequently perhaps, to

[1] Cremer, *Bib.-Theol. Lex.*

[2] Tasker, article on "Beatitudes," *D.C.G.*

those most intimate with Him. Such revolutionary valuation of morals could scarcely be so deep in His nature without finding some expression among His friends. These ideas would be naturally recapitulated, promulgated on some more public occasion. They may have been whispered to His disciples who gathered round Him on the hill slopes as a private reminder of oft-repeated and most vital principles. Or they may have been proclaimed with clear, startling challenge to all who were within reach of His voice, and to the world beyond them. The possibilities of the occasion are many, and offer a legitimate field for a restrained imagination. The only impossibility is that these sayings came from any other source than the spiritual genius of Him whose whole nature was the shrine of the Holy Ghost. Jesus does not speak in words of a sober, cautious calculation, weighing an uninspired morality in the balances of a cold prudence. His speech is winged with Divine ardour, carried away in holy passion aflame with the enthusiasm of virtue; He abundantly utters the memory of God's great goodness and sings of His righteousness. William Blake touches the hem of the same enthusiasm when he sings of his own desire and resolve to build Jerusalem in England's fair and pleasant land:

"Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear; oh, clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!"

CHAPTER VI

THE BLESSING OF THE HUMBLE

"Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."—MATT. v. 3.

"Blessed are ye poor; for yours is the kingdom of God."—LUKE vi. 20.

"THE Poor" were a distinct and familiar class in the Jewish nation. Sometimes they were termed the "Afflicted," and either of these was the classical name for God's people in Exile,[1] and in post-exilic times they continued to have the same signification. To describe these "poor" two Hebrew words were used. Both mean literally "bowed down," but one, *ani*, signifies bowed down by circumstance, the other, *anav*, bowing themselves down in submission and humility. The latter points to the inward disposition and had a moral and spiritual value. The Psalms and Prophets show two contrasted parties in the nation—the faithful minority, mostly poor, and the proud and worldly majority, rich and oppressive. Jesus had been born and brought up among the pious minority, and He knew the virtues of their high spirit, and was assured that they were near the heart of all spiritual reality. In the temper of their generation many of them looked for a day of coming judgment and regeneration, which should establish a Jewish world theocracy and vindicate their faith. But Jesus led their minds to a higher thought of the Rule

[1] G. A. Smith, *Isaiah*, vol. ii.

of God, which should include while it transcended the best elements of the national hope. He declared with enthusiasm that their sincere aspirations and humble faith were the anticipation of, and the best preparation for, every deliverance that might be in store for them, because they qualified them for the present possession of that higher and spiritual order of life. We can understand that Jesus did apostrophize the whole class of the suffering poor, present and absent, when He said, "Blessed are ye poor."

On the other hand, the form of direct address may be due to Luke, and so provides another example of his fondness for the dramatic form. This evangelist may well have had in mind the Poor as they were known to him, and he emphasizes the poverty out of his deep sympathy. But we need not suppose that he forgot their fear of God and their humble spirit, or failed to recognize these qualities as the empowering means of the blessedness. The chief matter is that both Gospels convey the assurance that this poverty was no sign of Divine displeasure, as current theories of life maintained. It barred no way to the Kingdom, but in fact of experience was the true opening of those portals which were like the eye of a needle to the burdens and pride of the rich. Not in some spectacular future but in the daily scenes of the present, the Poor enter the blessing and the high privilege of that new order of life in which Jesus Himself lived and which He called men to share.

In this first Beatitude Jesus had in mind a definite human quality which He sought to bring into the light of day, to develop and make more effective. It was the virtue of lowliness of mind which He claimed for Himself, the spiritual quality of humility. Augustine said, "The poor in spirit are the humble and those who fear God." The Greek word for humility, ταπεινοφροσύνη,

was one of the words which Christian ethics rescued from a low, degraded estate and baptized into a new and august significance. In the circle of greatness which He established it became a notable virtue worthy of all honour. The ancient pagan, like many a modern counterpart, despised humility. Before the day of Nietzsche, it was classed as a "slave virtue," a mean thing to be cast out of all approach to the qualities of noble manhood, an abortion born of sickness and incompetence. The Stoic Seneca said it disqualified for any human greatness. Possibly he had in mind the quality of Magnanimity (μεγαλοψυχία), to which Aristotle, three hundred years before Christ, gave the highest place among virtues. Magnanimity is a great human excellence which may with great advantage be more fully baptized into Christianity. But Aristotle based it on an exalted form of self-esteem rather than on humility. Pagan life among the Greeks was not lived consciously before any Divine excellence, and therefore the way was fatally open to a boundless self-assertion. Upon this there was some wholesome check, because the gods were regarded as envious of undue prosperity in men, and especially hostile to insolent pride (ὕβρις). There lies an element which was capable of being led on to a true reverence for Deity, and upon this reverence, deepened and vitalized, Jesus combined two ideas which had been universally regarded as contrary to each other—humility and true human greatness. With clear intention He placed this despised virtue first among those qualities which reveal and constitute right character. As evil pride is the first of all the deadly sins, the nurse and mother of all the rest, so humility stands supreme among all Christian virtues. Jesus makes this human quality fundamental, and His discernment has been shared by all teachers of Christian ethics

and by great poets like Dante, Milton, Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare.

The poor in spirit first bow before God conscious of their deficiency, their personal unworthiness. They turn humbly towards the Infinite riches, aware of their complete dependence upon the Divine resources for all that makes life adequate and blessed. They repudiate all self-sufficiency and put aside personal vanity. All which they have and can do they regard as largely due to others who have gone before them, and above all affectionately attribute to the Author and Giver of every good and perfect gift.

To be girt with humility is to have the whole nature bound together by a positive lowliness which has seen something of the ideal knowledge, goodness, truth. The girding is most adequate when this vision beholds God in every ideal. That lofty vision bows the spirit in the dust, and a brave-hearted Paul confesses himself chief of sinners. But it also gives rise to a continuous and cheerful aspiration. The perfect apprehension of the moral glory of Deity is traceable in our Lord's reply to one who had casually and conventionally hailed Him as "Good Master."[1] Beneath the demand for reality in thought and speech, a sense of continual pressing on to the ideal Holiness is evident. Self-complacent virtue cannot be attributed to Him who said, "I can of myself do nothing. . . . I live by the Father."[2]

To realize the fact of inward poverty is fundamental for the noblest prowess of the spirit and for successful life everywhere. Without it men can learn nothing, achieve nothing. One of Lord Bacon's great principles for scientific research was that Nature would only reveal

[1] Matt. xvii. 16–17; Mark x. 17–18; Luke xviii. 18–19.
[2] John v. 19; vi. 57.

her secrets to the humble, childlike temper. In all work that demands the finer sensibilities, the work of musician, painter, poet, preacher, the first of these sensibilities is that of the humble mind. Self-sufficiency is the stumbling-block in all human ways. It can make a failure of any man ; can kill the soul of an artist ; is most of all fatal to the soul of a Christian. In all spheres " Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." And " before honour is humility."

Yet humility is suspect among many, and few are found who heartily embrace it. It cannot even yet be called a popular virtue. For example, " Father Payne " is a delightful creation in which Mr. A. C. Benson has depicted one who is a noble guide to young artists, authors, and others who are his friends and disciples. The ideal represented enriches human life. Yet in that ideal Father Payne will have no place for humility. Like very common people, this distinguished author first debases the coinage and then repudiates it. He regards humility as abject and grovelling ; it ought to be extinct as a virtue. " There is no use in being abject. Don't be humble. Make your bow like a man. A man ought to know exactly what he is worth." But that difficult computation needs some standard of value. What shall it be ? " Not your fellow-men," says Father Payne ; " nor must we compare ourselves despondently with God." And truly in the judging of ourselves we are warranted in remembering that we are travellers towards a goal, not having yet arrived. Both our nature and our work are in process, and must be estimated accordingly. We are not to go to any ideal whatsoever for discouragement, but for inspiration. True humility does not require any depreciation of our gifts or excellences, but it does demand aspiration towards an ideal. An artist ought to know the value

of his work, and, most of all, he ought to know if there be in it any sense of the unattained, any striving after finer excellence. If that aspiration be present, it carries in it humility. Between true poverty of spirit and thankful pride in what we are able to do there is no antagonism. " All through music and me," was the humble pride of Abt Vogler as he contemplated the palace of music he had reared. And ever, in true humility, nothing abject or grovelling finds a place. Nor is this quality synonymous with pusillanimous contentment, want of enterprise, such as is suggested by Bunyan's shepherd boy in the " Valley of Humiliation " :

> " He that is down need fear no fall,
> He that is low no pride."

Nor has it any affinity with the spirit of Mr. Fearing, who was " afraid to venture on account of not being worthy." The humility which can beat down the Apollyon of pride is no feeble or passive virtue, but robust, positive, heroic. It qualifies for the best. It is capable of possessing the kingdom of man and the all-comprehending Kingdom of God.

In every realm of human experience, the sureness of knowledge, the competence of eye and hand attained by eager aspirants are " the treasure of the Humble." These can lay hold on life wherever they meet it. They can grasp and use the unmeasured forces of this world, and they can take to themselves the vitalizing forces of the Kingdom of heaven. The wonder and charm and mystery of the heavens and the earth bear no benediction to the dead heart which can say, " I have need of nothing." But those who are deeply aware of their need see in them continual suggestion of the infinite reaches of spiritual realms beyond, the white gleam of the perfect loveliness and the unscaled heights of Holi-

ness. They possess the Kingdom because they possess God Himself, the glory and life of the Kingdom.

The same humility prepares for all the social sympathies which are the flesh and blood of the new Christian order. He who has drawn near to God in lowliness of heart will not stand in the isolation of superiority or walk in pride before any of his fellows. He will be ready to stoop to service. The God he has humbly approached he will discern in those he can help. The Hindu poet says, "The Great walks with the Small without fear. The Middling stands aloof."[1] When Jesus was most keenly aware of His personal greatness, when He knew that He was come from God and went to God, He took a towel and girded Himself and began to wash the disciples' feet. So it is that the passion of redemption, the holy joy of sacrifice, belong to those who, like their Lord, are lowly of heart. They are made into the likeness of the Incarnation and the Cross and also of the Ascension, for in every way of Christian excellence and honour he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

[1] Sir Rabindranath Tagore, "Stray Birds."

CHAPTER VII

THE COMFORT OF THE MOURNERS

"Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted."—MATT. v. 4.

"Blessed are ye that weep now; for ye shall laugh."—LUKE vi. 21.

LUKE shows again his fondness for the striking contrast in the way he sets the mourner in opposition to the gay-hearted. The mourners are blessed not for any true quality in themselves so much as in their prospect of a complete revulsion to laughter. Those who weep and those who laugh shall one day change places, as Lazarus and Dives found each his lot reversed in the new world. The contrast may be left, as in the parable, to make an impression so that each may find the reason of it in experience. Also the tone of the Beatitude in Luke is made harsh by the use of the word κλαίειν, which refers to the outward signs of grief, the tears and lamentations, rather than to the inward mourning, such as Matthew's word πενθεῖν signifies. The pitifulness of these noisy lamentations, ever becoming more conventional, would be increased to the sensitive heart of the evangelist as he felt what little comfort could be derived from these mourning customs. The Jewish people bore heavy burdens, in times of bereavement, over and above their personal grief and loss. Their religion, as the rabbis had made it, bound all kinds of regulations, actions, and prohibitions upon them. The bread which

one ate in his mourning was defiled. Association with the dead made him ceremonially unclean, and innumerable restrictions on his personal liberty, his reading, his cleanliness and comfort, were imposed, lasting, some of them, for months. These customs made mourning largely into a ceremony, a dreary ritual without meaning or value. Jesus was well acquainted with the heartless tyranny of these inhuman conventions, and He assures the mourners there was a deep fountain of comfort which none of these could give.

The idea of comfort being bestowed on mourners was far from strange to earlier Hebrews. The second Isaiah opens his appeal to the exiled ones with the Divine charge to comfort His helpless people, to speak to their heart with a new hope (Isa. xl. 1, 2). Jesus turns to the same prophet for words to describe His own mission to the poor, the broken-hearted (ch. lxi. 1, 2). He may or may not have read on from the comfort and healing of the heart to the glowing imagery of the rich garments and the great forest trees which the prophet used to declare the new life that God has in store for His now sorrowful people. It cannot have been far from His mind. This prophet and Jeremiah both tell of mourning being turned into joy by the Divine comfort (Jer. xxxi. 13–17). A prayer in one of the Hebrew prayer books worships God as the Comforter of Zion, and pleads that He will comfort all that mourn, and cause them to rejoice in their agony. But none of these assign to the mourner a spiritual distinction as Jesus does. He goes beyond all customary thought in giving to the sorrowing the place commonly allotted to the joyous, the prosperous, the light-hearted, the happy ones of the popular imagination. He does not deny the happiness that comes in their freedom from sorrow and in their gaiety, but He

declares that the truest benediction belongs to the mourner: "For they shall be comforted."

The sympathy of Jesus went beyond those who are bereaved. The deep value of the benediction is that it expresses His whole attitude towards earthly sorrow and pain. He had in mind those who were caught in the bewildering disappointments and pains of the spirit which life brings to so many. His words reveal that He believed in this world as it is, and accepted it in the confidence that God would bring it to a noble issue for those who suffered its most mysterious experience.

Early commentators like Clement of Alexandria, Chrysostom, and Jerome, and many in the present, hold that Jesus has especially in view those who mourn on account of their own sin, the sins of others, or of the community. If this had been the chief thought, then Matthew, who expands the poor into the poor in spirit to ensure its spiritual interpretation, would probably have expanded this too. But he leaves it in its pregnant simplicity. Mourning for sin must have its full share in the benediction. A sensitive heart in regard to our moral imperfections and failures, and in respect of the many shameful evils of the world in general, is truly blessed and may be sincerely sought after. The contrite heart brings the deep comfort of the Divine forgiveness. Grief resembling Isaiah's because he was a man of unclean lips and dwelt among a people of unclean lips, and because these offend against the Holy Majesty and thwart the Divine purpose, will not only merit and gain the true comfort, but will be the noblest incentive to energy of purpose in the right making of the life, and thus prepare the way for more intimate comfort. Mourning for sin which stirs the soul to goodness and truth is what Dante understands by this Beatitude. The bene-

diction is spoken by the Angel of Zeal and spiritual alertness in opposition to the sin of spiritual sloth.

> "He stirred his outspread wings and fanned our brow,
> Declaring that the mourners are the blest,
> For rich in consolation are their souls." [1]

The sensitive heart, regarding violations of Love, is fundamental to all progress in the Christian career. And through all the sorrows due to the painful side of life in general, that sensitive spirit is not far away. Many trials and disappointments are directly caused by a disturbed and broken condition of the world. In the midst of these disturbing facts, the heart cannot but mourn and be sad, not selfishly for its own peace, but unselfishly for the peace of the world and the glory of God. It is the shallow heart that can always be gay in a sore distressed age. But this Beatitude gives the assurance that men need not turn away from this painful trial, regarding it as all loss. If men bear themselves aright towards it and towards the God of their spirit, even this painful experience will bring unmeasured gain. Jesus had known the barbed pangs that strike on the human mind and heart. His face was more marred than any man's. Yet He had been folded in the Everlasting Arms, and from His own life He speaks to all that mourn. In the realized comfort of the Divine compassion there is a holy compensation, a lasting gain, a quality of spirit, which are worth far more than all the sorrow costs.

While this world is full of inscrutable sorrow, it is also charged with comfort. The whole course of the world and the life of men one with another tend to bring that comfort which is higher and finer than the happy gaiety which has known no trouble. The very gaiety

[1] *Purg.* xix. 48–50.

and gladness, rightly used, lay up stores of resource which are available in the evil day. The vision of God in the light will ensure that the blessed Countenance will look in upon darkened lives with healing and restoration, with comfort which is worth everything, and is far more than ease from pain. The sympathy men receive, the sympathy they give, does much to open the heart to the persuasion that God is good. Nature, too, truly approached, is a source of comfort. Some say nature is unfeeling, heartless, paying no heed to human woe. In the valley of tears through which they pass, they resent the calm beauty, the ordered life of the world around and above. But surely they would not add the gloom of nature to the grief? That calm majestic pageant of beauty is the very image of the Eternal goodness and truth. Nature's myriad voices speak of gladness beyond the pain. The ordered march of the heavens reveals the unchangeable purpose of all the generations. Nature combines with the best human sympathies to assure of that Love which shall transmute the griefs into glory, and make the all things of our experience to comfort the heart. The sorrows of men are hard to bear. But in the process the nature is enlarged and deepened. The trials dig channels of receptiveness into which the best can be poured. The finest sensibilities are awakened. Life's real values are discerned by eyes that have been, as Francis Thompson says, euphrasied, healed, and cleansed, by tears. Nothing short of this can be the comfort our nature needs, a comfort which makes the person nobler and stronger. Diversion and comfort are poles asunder. Comfort is literally strength. Jesus speaks of something wider than the penitence of the sinner, but that penitence, leading to a zealous alacrity in the seeking of all spiritual fitness, would make more real those spiritual

forces that enfold all our frail human lives with intimate protection, and these will surely bring forth a gladness and a peace which are the hallowed fruits of fellowship with God. In that Divine atmosphere, "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but those that are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

CHAPTER VIII

THE HERITAGE OF THE MEEK

"Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth."—MATT. v. 5.

THIS Beatitude appears at first sight to be a literal reproduction of an Old Testament benediction. But in the Hebrew of Ps. xxxvii. 11 the word used is *anav*, which signifies those who are humbled not so much by circumstance as by a reverent, submissive spirit. The Old Testament example would be more strictly classified under the first Beatitude. But Jesus uses a word which has come down to us in the Greek πραΰς or πρᾳ̂ος, and He couples it with, while distinguishing it from, ταπεινὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ, when He claims to be meek and lowly of heart (Matt. xi. 29). Some of the most persuasively beautiful of all New Testament presentations of human excellence are those which speak of meekness, mostly associated with some of the more refined virtues.[1]

The promise attached to the virtue in the Psalm does not appear to extend beyond such possession of the land of Canaan as is anticipated in earlier writings.[2] The Psalm, by its artificial acrostic character and its didactic quality, is affiliated with the Wisdom Literature of the later post-exilic period, which produced also

[1] 1 Pet. iii. 4; 1 Cor. iv. 21; 2 Cor. x. 1; Gal. v. 23, vi. 1; Eph. iv. 2; Col. iii. 12; 1 Tim. vi. 11; 2 Tim. ii. 25; Tit. iii. 2; Jas. i. 21, iii. 13; 1 Pet. iii. 15.

[2] Gen. xv. 7; Deut. iv. 31.

Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes, when prolonged thought had been exercised on the national hope and on the perplexities which beset the earlier naïve faith in the Divine providence. The horizon of the compiler of these gnomic judgments on life had been widened, his ideas of the earth enlarged, and also the thought of the expected domination had been spiritualized. Holtzmann says that the promise of wide inheritance had become a symbolic expression of the totality of Divine blessing and of Messianic happiness. And if this discernment of the intimate connection between inward and outward good existed in these earlier times, we can scarcely deny it to a later. The disciples who preserved this Beatitude may well have concentrated their hope in some definite expectation of Hebrew dominance, but they must also have learned something of the meaning of world influence from our Lord's emphasis of the essential connection between lowly service and human greatness (Matt. xxii. 24 ff.). And Jesus, by bringing these ancient words into the circle of the human qualities which He sets forth as supremely important, bestows upon them a new spirit.

It has been maintained by many scholars who specialize on the New Testament, that this was not originally one of the Beatitudes as Jesus gave them. They are supposed to have been added from the many Beatitudes uttered by our Lord. The reasons assigned for this exclusion are far from convincing. And the argument is not supported by the fact that Luke omits the saying. The explanation may be that the current interpretation was to him far too much Jewish and too little Christian. In truth, meekness finds a very slender place, if any, in his entire Gospel. Yet he was well able to give the virtue that broader significance which it bears in this circle of Beatitudes. Probably the omission is

due to the idea that the ground was amply covered by the fundamental virtue of humility. The two are often confused, even by men of discernment, and they are akin. Humility is the virtue on which meekness must be based, without which no comportment or outward behaviour is really meek. The two can only be separated in thought, not in human experience. Humility rather emphasizes the right bearing towards God, while meekness lays main stress on the spirit towards man and life in general.

Humility and meekness are also bound together in the common contempt they encounter in much present-day sentiment. The human value of both is denied if not derided. A caricature of meekness is erected and then stoned. Yet the most stalwart protester against any high place being assigned to meekness can scarcely have contemplated its opposite, for which he can have no great love. That opposite, according to Dante and all our best ethical teachers, is base, selfish anger; "evil wrath," as Dante distinguishes it. An uncontrolled expression of the worst in ourselves against those who do, or are supposed to do, wrong to us; bitterness against some personal hardship or limitation; resentment against the whole system of things; blind declarations that there is no plan in life, coupled with contempt for the "sorry scheme of things," in the manner of Omar Khayyám—these can present little attraction to any cultured intelligence. Yet men of culture and wisdom strangely fall foul of what they mistakenly regard as meekness. Father Payne would abolish it along with humility, which he confuses with it and then anathematizes as of the same disagreeable breed. Yet in the same delightful volume he gives a statement of a human disposition and temper which is really meekness. He is speaking to a young friend

who is preparing for a life-work in literature where he may expect to encounter the biting, if not malicious, shafts of adverse criticism. And he counsels him to meet these slings and arrows thus: "If your critic reveals a weak place in your work, admit it and do better. Make your idea clear, stick to it, repeat it in a more attractive way. The positive assertion of good, the shaping of beauty, the presentment of a fruitful thought in so desirable a light that other people go down with fresh courage into the dreariness and dulness of life with all the delight of having a new way of behaving in their hearts. That is how I want you to fight. It requires the toughest kind of courage, I can tell you. But instead of showing your spirit by returning a blow, show your spirit by propounding your idea in a finer shape. . . . It is really a far more civilized thing, and often stands for a higher degree of force and honour, to be able to bear contradiction not ignobly." We may add it is also a more Christian thing, in accordance with Him who bore, not ignobly, the contradiction of sinners. Again the mentor says: "I don't believe mechanically in humiliation and renunciation and ignominy and contempt as purifying influences. It all depends upon whether they are gallantly and adventurously and humorously borne." Precisely. It is never wise to believe mechanically in the wholesome working of anything in life. What life's hardships make of us, and we make of them, depends upon the way we face them—with courage and a chivalrous, sporting temper, or with a dismal, complaining, angry spirit. But Father Payne ought to see that this gallant, adventurous spirit is just one of the finest species of that quality which Jesus calls meekness, the opposite of petulance and ignoble anger. Instead of this he seems to regard meekness as the negation of all manly quality, as a weak amiability

which has no fight in it and no moral backbone. True meekness requires the finest kind of courage. It is not antagonistic to a right sternness. In a world which contains hypocrites, and criminal degenerates, sternness is righteously necessary. But it must be sternness with pity, sympathy, self-control, and charity at the heart of it, or it is not Christian sternness. Justice among men must be done, but again it is not Christian justice if it have not humility and meekness at its heart. The wide principle is expressed by the Apostle : " Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye that are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness ; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." [1]

Meekness is often regarded as the negation of a right self-expression, but in fact there is no antagonism between them. Meekness is a restraint on some forms of self-expression, but they are imperfect and inferior forms. Nietzsche speaks of all restraint as a lowering of life. He conceives of a right self-expression as the free following of instinct ; the glory and excitement of combat, the sense of strength and struggle, as the means by which the superman is to be produced. He rightly emphasizes these robuster virtues of a man, but he fails to see that they can all be maintained in a spirit of meekness, and that the acquirement of that milder virtue demands them in the inward life. Quite apart from all evil resentment in thought and act, there is ample scope for the combat, the struggle, and the fine fervour of them, in the conquest of the lower instincts of human nature. There are instincts of the spirit as well as of the animal nature, but Nietzsche is strangely oblivious of them. The broader self-realization involves a progressive control of impulse, desire, and passion, for the sake of obtaining a full, untrammelled life for the whole

[1] Gal. vi. 1.

self, including the higher faculties of reason and the moral sense. The age-long problem has been how to adjust the external to the internal life, and the solution of Jesus is that the external, while none of its rights are denied or disparaged, must be subordinated to the internal; the instinctive self-expression to that which is reasoned and controlled.

Meekness is misrepresented when regarded as a weak refusal of all strife, whatever be the cause, or as a pusillanimous cringing before the angry face of human antagonism. And it is caricatured when it is depicted with sour or dejected visage. Meekness is a smiling virtue, a thing of beauty. The French translation of this New Testament word is *débonnaire*, which has the sense of affable, gentle, and so, meek. It is akin to the spirit of a Chevalier Bayard who combined the noble valour of a soldier with the justice and magnanimity, the charm and gentleness, of true chivalry. Who is the finest man, saying nothing of the Christian, when exposed to insult or malignity? He who flames into a hot passion of resentment and uncontrolled anger? He who controls his speech, calculating that so he will the more anger his adversary? He who is content to meet insult with the biting sneer of contempt? He who scorns to give way to manifest anger because it is so ridiculous? Is there anything fine or noble in any of these attitudes? Or is it he who meets the insult with the gentle answer which turns away wrath, who confronts the maligner with a smile of genuine good nature? He who is prepared to express his sorrow if he has, unaware, given cause for annoyance? Which is most dignified, most honourable to the man? The answer is not in doubt. But the good nature must be deeper than mere temperament, or a philosophical genial view of life's vexations. The hot impulses must be subdued by larger considerations

than those that cause the trouble. The meekness must be the expression of a heart that bows before God and therefore lives in reverence before all He has made. Jesus is the supreme example of meekness and lowliness. No heart was ever so lacerated by the injustice and the malignity of this world. The pangs His spirit bore inwardly, in face of human insincerity and alienation from all that was Divine, were symbolized outwardly in the agonies of the Cross. Men have declared that the fact that such sufferings should be the lot of One so divinely worthy goes far to destroy men's faith in God. But Jesus accepted that lot with meekness. He bowed His neck to the yoke which love to God and man imposed, and found that yoke kindly to His nature. For that insincerity which posed as the fine flower of piety and deceived and destroyed the people, He gave a way to His anger. But it was anger suffused with meekness, the Wrath of the Lamb. For wrongs done to Himself He expressed no resentment, and He meekly bowed to all the hardships He had to bear in the way of His vocation. In the words of the Negro Spirituel : " He never said a murmurin' word." He was assured that every one of these indignities and pangs could and would, in some way hidden from His vision, serve the Holy Purpose.

In that Divine light we may understand what meekness means and discern its essential nobility, and also learn to value aright this broad promise which Jesus gives that the meek shall inherit the earth. Leaving rightly out of account all shallow mockers, many are puzzled and bewildered. Surface observation of human affairs does not encourage so large a faith in the virtue of meekness. They love the virtue and practise it, but cannot see how it tends to world dominion. That genial literary humanist, Mr. E. V. Lucas, says the

words were meant ironically. The inheritance indicated was a piece of earth six feet by two. The critic might have felt the poetic spirit in the Teacher and Lover of men, and understood the deepest kind of possession and power as His fine delicate mind thought of it. To Him the earth meant more than its land surface, and possession of it more than title-deeds and land values and treaties. Is the Man of men the only speaker who shall be denied poetical and spiritual expression? The Apostle Paul speaks of himself "as having nothing, yet possessing all things." He declares that Christian believers are in like case. "All things are yours . . . whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." Manifestly there are two kinds of world ownership, one of which may be associated with most apostolic poverty. Real possession of this earth's surface is not necessarily his who draws most rent from it, but his who most delights himself in its charm and suggestion. A picture gallery belongs to any man who can understand the paintings and learn wisdom from them. A popular song declares, in terms no man of imagination can misunderstand, "Love me and the world is mine." And Browning, in higher strain, sings of being lord of all creation, lord of heaven and earth, through the kiss of a girl.[1] Translate this enthusiasm of love into plain prose (an act of vandalism) and it represents the fact that the power of true love makes a man superior to all mere things, gives him dominion over them, enables him to press them into service to enrich his spirit. And Jesus, filled with a deep, poetic, and spiritual vision of the essential loveliness of meekness, and of its profound power at the very springs of human nature, enthusiastically and thankfully signalizes it for

[1] Browning, "A pearl, a girl."

all men to understand : " Blessed are the meek ; for they shall inherit the earth." He does not think only of what this virtue does in the man's own spirit, but more deeply of what it can effect in the ruling of human affairs. And what has more right to dominion in the lesser and the larger circles of humanity than the spirit of meekness, and what other order of rule is the world waiting for ?

In the lesser scope, real lasting power is not in the hands of the angry and resentful, but in the hands of the self-controlled, the loving, the meek. The ill-tempered, the self-assertive, may get their immediate way in the home or the business, but their influence has gone as soon as they go next door. When they die, their power dies with them, while the virtue and bene diction of the meek blossoms in the dust. In the wider reaches of life, in things national and international, it may seem that affairs are ruled by selfishness and force. It is the trouble of the time. A deeper reading of fact may reveal other and mightier forces at work, forces imbued with the spirit of the meek. May they soon be organized and made more effective. But meanwhile, does the larger view of history give any countenance to this Beatitude ? Mr. Mark Twain, in his own fashion, says the British Empire is a proof that the meek inherit the earth. The lurking satire bites, because we are conscious that what is generally known as meekness is not conspicuously a British characteristic, and there are some features of British rule which have never seen the face of this virtue. But in deepest reality, whatever real power we have wielded among the millions we have ruled has been due, not to our force, our self-will, our arrogance, but to the patient unselfish service we have rendered. The measure of our unresentful wisdom, the degree in which meekness has been at the heart of our

justice and power, is the sure measure of our lasting influence. The spirit of our Christian judges, administrators, soldiers, and traders will remain when all other orders of dominion have crumbled to nothingness.

In the dread arbitrament of a war which seemed to flout the idea of meekness being any factor in world dominion, the ultimate victory has not yet been proclaimed. The enthusiasm of Jesus warrants our faith that the spirit of willing sacrifice rendered by so many, a spirit essentially allied to the virtues, among them meekness, which these Beatitudes celebrate, will yet bring about a victory for itself beyond all other aims of the belligerents, and prevail over mere nationalism. And in these days when conflicting ambitions and jealousies are rampant, the deep issue will depend upon the spirit in which victory or defeat is used, in selfishness or in service, in resentment and aggression, or in humility and meekness. It is more than credible that defeat, accepted in meekness and giving rise to a nobler life among the defeated, would make them moral victors over the victorious, who should be so misdirected as to pursue their triumph in vainglorious forgetfulness of the true spirit and ends of human life. "The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small."

CHAPTER IX

SPIRITUAL HUNGER AND THIRST

"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled."—MATT. v. 6.

THE next three Beatitudes present less difficulty, being universally recognized as dealing with virtues which are essential to every right human ideal and character. The only fear is that the interpretation of them shall be shallow and otiose, and that the demand which these virtues too make on enterprise and valour shall be underestimated.

The first necessity is to have some idea of the many-sided nature of the Righteousness here spoken of. Among the Greeks the word δικαιοσύνη signifies that which is right in a man towards himself. It is separated from reverence to the gods, which is εὐσέβεια. Plato says "it has to do with that inward performance of it which truly concerns the man himself and his own interests," all designed "to reduce the many elements of his nature to a real unity in a temperate and harmonized man." [1] But the higher thought turned naturally towards righteousness as a social virtue. Aristotle speaks of it as the perfect virtue, not absolutely (ἁπλῶς) but as exercised towards one's neighbours. . . . He is the best who practises virtue not merely in his own person but towards others. And he quotes as proverbial that, "All virtue is in Justice comprehended." [2] The Hebrew

[1] Plato, *Repub.*, 443. [2] Aristotle, *Nic. Ethics*, v. 2.

conception rises immeasurably above the Greek, because it is not based primarily on duty to a man's own self, but upon his duty towards God. It was always a religious idea, and thus it includes not only all the noble ideal of Plato and of Aristotle, but it provides an inward inspiration for its performance, and contains in itself a principle ever expanding as the thought of the Divine requirement is deepened and enlarged.

The Old Testament shows that the Hebrew idea of righteousness was extremely flexible. The word has many synonyms expressing aspects of the virtue as it had to do with God or with men,[1] but in its crudest forms the thought of responsibility to God was fundamental. The primitive mind thought of it as that which was in accordance with the practices which had been enjoined by the national judges who declared Divine decisions. It was a righteousness of legalism, and the official, priestly part of the nation tended to insist on the ceremonial and external. But side by side with this was the prophetic spirit which tended to enlarge the nation's thought of God and to spiritualize His requirements. The prophets emphasize in the Divine righteousness the moral consistency of God, His faithfulness to His purpose and promise ; and in their higher reaches they approach the New Testament conception that pardoning love was an essential part of that righteousness. Jesus gave to the great word a much wider scope to include all possible virtue before the face of God, and in all human relations. It included Justice to man because it was first obedience to Him. And He set the ideal of

[1] The Greek LXX translates the Hebrew *Tsedeqah*, which becomes the New Testament δικαιοσύνη, not only by that word but also by κρίσις justice, ἔλεος mercy, ἐλεημοσύνη mercy as charity and almsgiving, and the adjective not only by δίκαιος but ἄμεμπτος blameless, καθαρός clean, pure, πιστός faithful, and by εὐσεβής reverent, pious.

righteousness on an entirely new basis by insisting on its inwardness, and by making it the response of the complete personality, not to an outward bond but to an inward impulse of love which sought a true conformity to the nature of Him who is Love.

It would be an anachronism to attribute to Jesus the doctrine, so strongly developed by St. Paul, of the justifying righteousness which comes by faith through the atoning power of the Cross. Luther inclined towards that view of the Beatitude. Its objects " were those whose great earnestness, desire, and fervour were directed toward a moral constitution free from guilt." Bengel, in similar vein, has it that " they are blessed who feel they have not that *justitiam* (that uprightness) which can approve them to God and to men, and who vehemently desire it . . . not as before a human but a Divine tribunal." The truth which underlies this conception is that man needs for his blessedness not simply to add virtue after virtue to the sum of his character, but to gain a nature which is fundamentally right even while imperfect. Jesus sought to bring to men that rightness by inspiring love in the heart, and He places this in contrast with the piecemeal righteousness of the legalist. This is not opposed to the doctrine of Paul when this is examined as a whole, for the faith which he thinks of as justifying is no barren creed, but a living faith which works by love. To Jesus the earnest desire for the right life before God gave a secure standing to the whole personality, not in some future Messianic judgment alone, but here and now. Whatever thoughts of the coming Kingdom were in the minds of the evangelists, whatever anticipations of such a Divine judgment were in the horizon of Jesus, no man's justification before God was to be postponed. In that ardent resolute desiring of righteousness the rightness of nature already

existed in the mind and spirit. It secured to a man that right balance, that equipoise of nature which was a true rightening of the life. The desire is set upon the right object, on the true end of a human soul. So long as that desire, that will-to-righteousness, is maintained the life is a right life, even while it fails of the full attainment. And only dishonesty can make that antinomian.

The content of the righteousness Christ seeks in man may be construed, in large measure, by the three Beatitudes which follow. It includes mercifulness, purity of heart, and the peacemaking spirit. This Beatitude may be taken as a transition between the preceding virtues which incline to the negative type, and those which are gloriously positive, inevitably carrying on the desire to a wider range. It may be too much to suppose that Jesus meant here to designate a desire for righteousness in all the world, but this larger scope directly results from the genuine longing for personal righteousness, for no man can be effectually saved unto righteousness in a vacuum, untouched by the unselfish passion for the peace of all men. The deepest motive for the desire being a passion for the honour of the Father's Name, it is impossible to confine it to anything personal. The source of all true character is in a heart made acceptable to God, a life made right in the face of Divine holiness. That carries with it the assurance of all right desire for the world God has made, the race He is redeeming.

With such righteousness in view, Jesus calls men to an intense desire for its attainment. Hunger and thirst are two of the most urgent causes of desire in our bodily life, rising to a vehement passion when there is a danger of not being able to obtain what is essential. And Jesus would have men to be moved by a deep sense of the vital necessity in the spirit, and to have an im-

perative desire for a right life before God and man. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness ; for they shall have their desire. They shall be filled with righteousness.

Clearer emphasis could not be laid upon desire as the secret of a successful Christian life. Want of appetite for a larger and more adequate measure of true virtue in ourselves is a sure sign of spiritual inanity. Nothing more convincingly demonstrates low vitality, and nothing can add so distressingly to the inward depression. Content with the manly vigour already possessed is a deadly ailment which will speedily reduce that vigour to non-existence. A Divine discontent with present attainment will be as wings to the nature, bearing it beyond a poor, bounded existence to the largeness of noble character. According to the measure of the longing so is the attainment, for the Divine blessing cannot bestow itself beyond the will to possess which is at the same time the capacity to receive and hold. A dull conscientious obedience to any law which remains external to the inward emotion will never produce a right life. Betweeen a life that painfully drills itself into obedience without inspiration, and a life that hungers and thirsts after righteousness, there is a universe of difference. They do not inhabit the same sphere. The successful life must desire as well as obey. Jesus bade the servants who had done no more than their duty to declare their unprofitableness. His whole effort was to quicken the inward personality to an unwearied aspiration which should transcend outward obligation, for this was the sure proof of the right spirit and the pledge of the completer attainment.

The nearer one comes to an adequate conception of Righteousness as it was in Jesus, and of the nature of the right desire for it, the more inevitable becomes the

blessing pronounced on that desire. That inward longing shall not be in vain. Our Lord speaks to those who know the desperate desire for deliverance from their bondage to sin's oppression, for some Divine reality to fill their empty, barren lives, for the recovery of their lost selves—desires for which the thirst of Dives for the one drop of water to cool his parched tongue is only too apt a figure. To all such He gives the assurance that they shall not remain famished and hopeless. They shall be filled with that which they seek. "Set Love in order, thou that lovest Me," is a great saying ascribed to St. Francis of Assisi. "Ordina quest' Amore, O tu che m'ami" (Keep Love in its true measure, erring not by excess, by defect, or by distortion). On that principle the whole scheme and method of Dante's Cleansing Mount is founded. It contains the secret of all true aspiration and attainment. Love set in order towards God and men, then desire also is fashioned according to the Holy Will, and the way to the satisfaction of the soul is unobstructed. But the blessing of the life does not wait for that complete adjustment of the inward and outward being. Still less does it wait for some promised transformation of the whole scheme of things, Messianic or philosophic. In the present measure of the longing and of its inward rightness, the blessing is realized. The life of desire is already in itself a benediction.

"He that cometh unto Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst" (John vi. 35). The hunger of the hopeless soul, the thirst of the helpless spirit, are no more. But the healthful spiritual appetite remains, receiving to itself larger and finer beatitude as it is enlarged and refined. It is the hunger and thirst of those who have access to the infinite supplies of the Father's house. It is the desire which makes

the gladness of life, the springing of the living water in the soul. It was the desire of the most successful of the apostles, who counted not himself to have apprehended. It was the hunger and thirst of our Lord, the constant aspiration and desire by which He held righteousness in His life and made Him the well-beloved Son in whom the Father was well pleased. In Him, and in all His followers, it is desire for all that can purify the ideas, exalt the ambitions, enlarge the sympathies. It is passionate longing for a better world, a more understanding, juster, kinder world for all men to live in, to which they all bring their contribution, into which the nations shall bring their honour and glory. All rightness comes in that desire for men and nations, and as it rises in the heart of man it will, in its ever-widening measure, meet with success, for the God of all Righteousness will satisfy it with Himself.

CHAPTER X

THE BENEDICTION ON THE MERCIFUL

"Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy."—MATT. v. 7; cf. LUKE vi. 36–38.

ST. LUKE omits this Beatitude, but expresses the substance and spirit of it, with warmth and eloquence, in the body of his version, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." He introduces at this point the injunction against unmerciful judgment of others, given later in Matthew, and adds two logia not found in Matthew's sermon: "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven: give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." In principle this is the equivalent of the promise to the merciful, "Ye shall obtain mercy." And the whole passage includes both the negative and the positive side of the merciful spirit.

Mercy means compassion for the suffering and the sinful, and naturally involves the generous mind to help those we pity. Negatively, it saves men from being hard on the weak and wandering, be they in our own family or outside it. It delivers from that grudging self-torturing spirit of envy which rejoices in others' suffering or downfall. It makes impossible that indifference which withholds kindliness from wrong-doers. Positively, it is that generosity of heart which rejoices in another's joy and welfare, which delights to share the good of

life with as many as possible. On the Cleansing Mount, Dante saw the embodiment of Mercifulness drawing near, and his whole nature was bowed down with the splendour and amazement. Waves of leaping light smote upon his eyes more than he could endure. And these were but the reflection of the Divine bountifulness the image of which was the glorious Sun which blesses all that lives.

One of the chief complaints Jesus made against the Jewish leaders of religion was for their reluctance to show mercy to sinners and to those ignorant of the Law. It was some virtue in them that they had progressed beyond that indifference to moral distinctions which so deeply marked the pagan. "Ecce Homo" reminds us that in the *Iliad* there is no villain. Most of the characters and the gods themselves did bad things without serious reprobation. The impiety of killing a father or a suppliant, bad faith to a herald, or perjury, met, it was believed, with vengeance from the Furies, but the offences themselves could be easily overlooked on the ground that the doer was bewildered. In the same way, most of the perpetrators of evil deeds in Wagner's music-dramas, reflecting no doubt the spirit of his sources, are clear of moral condemnation because the actors are bewitched. The Jews were not embarrassed in their moral judgments in this fashion. They understood the meaning of guilt, but they imagined that their duty towards wrong-doers was done when they had exercised justice upon them. Jesus reproached them with wilful ignorance of their own Scriptures. "Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." So long as they failed to act in a generous spirit towards sufferers and sinners, they were not true in their religion. Minute scrupulosity about ritual and sacrifice was of no avail so long as they forgot

the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and faith.

In the thought of Jesus, mercy was not subversive of justice or inconsistent with it. Justice could not be without it. Seeley speaks of moral indignation against wrong being first expressed and afterwards mercy. But the two must operate together in the same act, or neither is what it professes to be, and neither is Christian. The principle applies to our private dealing with offences against ourselves or against society, and also to the more public administration of justice. It is frequently declared that a judge cannot show mercy. He is bound by certain statutes which he is there to administer, not to alter. But the spirit of mercifulness can seek to understand the offender and to assign that punishment which will be most for the ultimate good of the wrong-doer. In our British courts this is continually done with admirable effect, which I have seen in operation. The merciful spirit in any community may be splendidly put to work in securing greater elasticity in our laws themselves, as well as a more humane discrimination in their administration. Justice with mercy at the heart of it is finely exhibited by Browning in *The Ring and the Book*. The Pope, superb embodiment of the ideal Father in God, has laid on him the duty to determine the fate of Count Guido, already condemned for the brutal murder of his child-wife Pompilia, and of her subservient, shuffling parents. The whole crime lies before him. He understands the innermost thoughts of the criminal, and is not without that spirit of sympathy, without which there can be no justice, and which the worst criminal can rightly claim. The public excitement in Rome is intense. A many-sided appeal clamours round the court of justice against the death of this high-placed murderer ; urging the danger

to society of such drastic and final action on an erring husband, or less convincingly pleading for time to allow of the man's repentance. But the Pope determines that the most just and most merciful treatment of the wretched Guido was to send him swiftly into that unseen world—

> "Into that sad, obscure, sequestered state
> Where God unmakes but to remake the soul
> He else made first in vain; which must not be."

The main motive in the justice was mercy. Other considerations must have their due place—the public morality, the protection of human safety, and the rest; but first and last and all through, Mercy. The "suddenness of fate" was the only hope for the man, that "truth might be flashed out by one blow, and Guido see, one instant, and be saved."

Mercy is love in operation. Its scope is wide as the over-arching sky. It is founded in the deepest instincts which belong to us as men. The quick leap of the mother's heart to the cry of her child is one image of it. And the perfect pattern is in the Love Eternal. In the Old Testament, one of its most satisfying expressions is given in the Book of Jonah. The Divine care for the dumb millions of Nineveh, culminating in His solicitude for the "six score thousand children, who could not discern between their right hand and their left, and also much cattle," is the nearest approach of the noblest spirit of Judaism to the boundless compassion of Jesus. Wherever there is suffering or sorrow is the most obvious sphere for mercy. Men may draw no lines of exclusion. The sinful cannot be left out of its operation. "Shall sorrow win His pity, and not sin, that burden ten times heavier to be borne?" Charitable forbearance when injured is one of the first and

elementary obligations of the merciful spirit. "We do pray for mercy, and that same prayer doth teach us to render the deeds of mercy." Pity is the touch of God in human hearts and must ever be a true element of mercy. It involves a sympathetic understanding of the many perversions which turn aside men from the normal. It takes in all that is meant by the humane spirit, and it has finely flowered, through that thoroughgoing investigation of the intimate relations between mind and body which has been a glory of our times, in what is now familiarly known as "physiological and psychological charity."

This Beatitude was ruthlessly contested by Nietzsche, who substitutes for it," Blessed are those who are hard," not, of course, for the sake of being hard, but to eliminate the unfit by nature's own methods for the sake of the race, to evolve a higher order of man. Mercy comes under the head of "slave morality," and must be superseded by mental and physical vigour. The contention is not without reason as against a thriftless unforeseeing softness. But Nietzsche confuses mercifulness with flabbiness, and fails to discern that mercy contains in itself the power of rigour, and that through all the hardness which is necessary in the right training of the race, both Divine and human mercy run as a thread of gold. "Be hard," he says, in that sweeping manner which he mistakes for comprehensiveness and courage. He would leave no room for the morbid and ailing, the sickly and helpless. Strange satire upon this hardihood that such a theory carried to its logical conclusion would have provided a lethal chamber for Nietzsche himself, and would thus have suppressed much truth concerning life which, amid all the extravagances of an unbridled imagination, this tortured, imprisoned philosopher expressed. It may be added that many

judgments on Nietzsche, written *ad hoc* in time of war, inclined more nearly to his beatitude than to that of Jesus.

Modern German theorizing makes much of following Nature. But it reveals a most restricted idea of what Nature is, as it includes man. The whole nature of man, as Christ rejoiced in it, controlled and satisfied by the spiritual element which is native to it, is seldom, if ever, in view. Compassion and mercifulness cannot be excluded from the human idea of a full man, and never is that idea so truly realized as when this spirit pervades the entire being. It opens the life to all human good and to the all-penetrating goodness. "They shall obtain mercy."

Beyond doubt the obtaining of mercy from Him who knows the human heart, with all its evil and blindness, is conditioned by a merciful spirit in him who desires mercy. One who refuses to bestow mercy is incapacitated from receiving it. A principle of life is involved. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." The heart closed against a brother man is a heart closed against the bounty of the Father God. They must "have judgment without mercy who have showed no mercy." The principle stands, even though it is modified, perhaps, when the unmerciful man's nature is perverted by some abnormality, when Mercy finds a particular freedom, and "rejoices over judgment." [1]

The unmerciful man lives with his own gloomy, disagreeable temper, and this is no mean retribution. He excludes himself from the generous light of life. And deepest of all, his evil unsubdued heart merits the Divine disfavour which Infinite Truth cannot set aside. Forgiveness is eternally available to the contrite, but the heart of a normal man which will not forgive is not

[1] Jas. ii. 13.

contrite. The merciful freely obtain that forgiveness which is fundamental to all blessedness. Absolution of sins from the Father of spirits becomes his most coveted possession, and the peace of it passes all understanding, and increases in proportion as the beauty and meaning of the Heavenly mercy grows upon his vision.

But more is meant by this Beatitude than the blotting out of transgression and the cancelling of debt. The abrogation of human ill-desert is but part of the outgoing of the Divine nature which delights in mercy. To the merciful all life shows itself merciful. St. Luke, with broad eloquence, dwells upon the overflowing generosity which men show towards the generous. "Give, and it shall be given unto you." Between giving and receiving, in all spheres of nature and life, lower and higher, there is a natural and vital correspondence. No living organism, no living soul, can exist without both. In human affairs, manifestly, there are many breaches in the generous response to generosity. Evil men may meet it with vileness and contempt. The Supreme Giver of our race had to endure the Cross before He gained the many crowns of human honour. The reward promised to the Giver is not always realized immediately, or in the same coin as the giving. The currency of earth may fail, but the higher currency is more than its equivalent. Broadly and ultimately, life everywhere is generous to the generous, and even while the human response to the givers appears to be absent, the Almighty response is ever present.

Above and beyond all else, the merciful obtain fellowship with the Divine mercy, which loves to impart itself to all men, but finds its freest opportunity in the life of the merciful. Human charity is a great reinforcement of the inward life, and prepares the way for

a greater. The heart open for generous treatment of others is open to receive all the moral forces which are akin to the Holy generosity. The putting away of a hard, relentless temper is itself a signal emancipation of the spirit. It gives a joy and freedom which themselves are a convincing witness to the splendid humanness of this virtue which Christ so warmly celebrates. The negative freedom leads on inevitably to the positive outgoing of the generous spirit, bearing in its train the delicate delights of unselfishness, and making more possible the understanding of the Infinite bounty. Not in any arbitrary manner but naturally, the merciful obtain mercy. The doors of their heart swing lightly on their hinges, and the Father of all mercies comes in. The glory of the Generosity which makes its sun to shine on the evil and the good is more abundantly unfolded. The mercy of God broods over the heart of the merciful, bringing forth virtue akin to its own. The worshipper receives his best Beatitude by becoming like the object of his worship. "As your Father is merciful."

CHAPTER XI

THE PURE-HEARTED

"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God."—MATT. v. 8.

ONE feels that this Beatitude should come as the crown of all the rest. It is the completest expression of the inwardness of Christian virtue, making explicit, what in the others is implicit, that in the inner life is the source of all moral excellence. Delicacy of thought is enshrined in it. Simplicity itself, it yet only reveals its refinement and beauty of idea to reverent search. And its breadth of conception compares with its fine discernment. Basing itself deep in the present life of man it looks on to the final vision of the Eternal glory.

Those addressed by Jesus were abundantly familiar with ceremonial and legal purity. The Jewish insistence upon national and individual purity was the distinguishing mark of their race as our Lord knew it. The Law, as expounded by the rabbis, laid down in painful detail the regulations concerning clean and unclean in matters of food, personal conduct, and ceremonial worship. In their relations with the non-Jewish world they maintained a rigid separateness which they regarded as holiness. Their thought of the Divine holiness tended more and more to become an exaggerated transcendence, as if the Infinite Sanctity would be lessened by intimate dealing with its own handiwork. The Law became increasingly artificial, opposed to all

spontaneity of impulse. And faithful, mechanical obedience to these all-too-human regulations passed muster with the priests and was held to be pleasing in the Holy sight. Jesus knew the imposition and the shallowness of this externality and the pathetic trust of the people in what was not to be trusted. So long as they could be satisfied with these scrupulosities they would never find the true way of life. So with unerring certainty He struck right across their sacrosanct regulations. Many of them He disregarded because they were so unnatural and so unnecessary. Others He deliberately violated as a distinct challenge to their futility and the bondage in which they held men. He opened the way beyond all this ritual into a new moral world. Defilement was in the heart. Nothing from without the man could make him unclean. And therefore cleanness must be in the inward parts. In the same process, the range of possible defilement was carried beyond the regulation lists of the rabbis into matters of the spirit and motive. Evil thoughts, deceits, covetousness, pride, and stupidity could stain the inner life. The purity of heart He desired included intellectual sincerity, a single-eyed desire for truth and honour, an unmixed motive of life and conduct, an unalloyed spirit of religion. He Himself summed it all as the heart of an unspoilt child.

To this simplicity and purity Jesus guaranteed an unmeasured blessedness. Not only was it pleasing to God, but it qualified for the vision of God. Such purity makes for right seeing and true understanding everywhere. No thought of any external revelation in the clouds of heaven can be in question here. For an apocalypse of that kind purity of heart would be no special qualification. Seeing God is not only the ultimate Vision of which our poets sing and for which

saints stretch their souls in desire, but it is beholding His spiritual presence in all beauty, all goodness, all delight, all sorrow, all life and reality. It is to rejoice with deepest reverence in the majesty and beauty of Divine holiness.

The first thought here is apt to be of freedom from one specific impurity. In the *Purgatorio* of Dante this blessing is pronounced by God's glad angel when the brand of sensualism is removed from the poet's brow. That gross sin is a deep disqualification for every true vision. All sins of lust tend to blind the eyes of the soul, not only "that one dark hour that brings remorse," but most of all "the sin which practice burns into the blood." [1] Engrained in the heart, twined about the central affections, it sears the heart, darkens the conscience, and leads away from all things natural and pure towards the outer darkness. Freedom in the heart from sensuality brings light into all our nature. Yet it does not by itself make purity of heart. The chaste man may be hard and cruel, malicious and uncharitable. These evil qualities are classed as sins of the flesh,[2] because they have their origin in the lower nature. But they are also sins of the spirit. They defile the inward life and pervert the inward vision. Many who count themselves pure have forgotten to reckon with stubborn prejudice, which resists all new truth and rejects all wholesome changes of custom; they overlook persistent violations of that charity which is the bond of all virtue, and the lack of which is its dissolution. All these sins of flesh and spirit are summed up in the deadly reality of selfishness. In gigantic forms it overshadows and curses the whole world. In its slighter-seeming forms, no less deadly, it disturbs the peace and

[1] Tennyson, "Merlin and Vivien."
[2] Gal. iv. 20; Rom. i. 29; Tit. iii. 3.

destroys the beauty of family and social life. It robs both nations and men of their vision. It is an all-pervading impurity of the human heart, depriving it of spiritual perception. One blinding sin can neutralize and make of no effect much true valour of spirit and aim. The knights of the Round Table went forth to seek the Holy Grail, with one impulse, but each with one deep unfitness for the quest. Only Sir Galahad saw, he whose strength was as the strength of ten because his heart was pure. Lancelot, with all his knightly nature twined about with one poisonous sin, one guilty passion, came to the place of vision by sheer valour, but was blinded and well-nigh consumed by the fierce light of that mystery. The quest was not for him. Good Sir Bors, loyal man and true, faithful and self forgetful, was so clouded with grief and love for Lancelot, and with longing for his success, that he had "small heart for the quest." Some faint dim sight was given to him, but veiled from nearer vision. The subtle sin of spiritual slackness[1] was the impurity which blinded him. Sir Percival came nearest to Sir Galahad in purity of heart, but he failed because he had not true humility, "the highest virtue, mother of them all." He had thought too much of his prowess and too little of his sins. The impurity of pride hindered his seeing. Only Galahad saw. He was girded for the quest by the pure nun sister who had attained the vision by prayer and fasting. She sent the deathless passion in her eyes through his kindred nature, and he beheld the mystery, not only in one rapt moment of ecstasy, but as a constant presence with him by day and by night.

The poem is very near to spiritual reality. It points to the many forms of evil which disqualify for the vision of the highest truth and perfect goodness which

[1] Cf. the Accidie of Dante, *Purg.* xvii.–xix.

the Grail symbolizes. And it represents truly the positive purity of heart which alone can enable for the vision. No negative cleansing can suffice. The need is for some living power to re-create the heart itself, to restore to it simplicity, and lift it above what is base and false, to awaken spiritual ardour. "No virtue is safe without enthusiasm." A morality which would defend itself by nothing more than a calculating prudence, with no flashing of the eye against assailers, cannot be pronounced either complete or strong or safe, nor does it make a pure heart. Mere virtue must be superseded by something deeper and more comprehensive, what Christians call Holiness, "without which no man shall see the Lord." A passionate flame in the heart for all that is noble and right, and for the honour of God, will surely purge it from guile and prejudice and evil desire, and make it simple, childlike, pure. The true work of Christ is to kindle that flame in our deepest affections. Pure in heart, He beheld the secret sanctities of life and God, of life in God. The beauty of the world was to His living zeal the reflex of the Divine countenance. He saw God, and He sends the deathless passion of His own heart into our kindred nature, and we, too, see.

The connection of purity with moral vision is not arbitrary but natural. The one belongs to the other. The purity makes possible the vision; the vision intensifies the purity. The principle is the master light of all human seeing. The unperverted heart of the mother, the purified affection, gives the sure vision of parental duty. The pure enthusiasm of the artist enables him to see the beauty of the world, enwrapped as it is in the world eternal, and to paint so as to make manifest the fatuity, the littleness of all pretence in the light of the wholesome sun. And when the work is done it stands as a summons to the pure in heart to see

it. The higher and finer the ambition the greater is the need for the purified sensibility and the guileless mind ; without purity of heart the best of our life walks in the night and stumbles. But with that purity established, then the highest blessing of unperverted vision is realized over the whole realm of existence. One of our older poets has sung of the vital connection between the discernment of beauty and inward purity :

> "We cannot sway
> From truth and virtue, but it draws a screen
> Over the face of day.
>
> The flowers shut up their wonders from our eyes,
> Their beauty which enchanted us ; and books
> Refuse to give the deeper sense that lies
> Revealed to virtuous looks.
>
> To perfect purity—if such could be—
> The earth were all transparent—the dull clod
> In which we neither life nor beauty see—
> Breathing the living God." [1]

Purity of heart is more than innocence. The unwarped nature of a child offers no evil barrier to the knowledge of God. But its vision is elementary, rudimentary, and cannot be compared with the deep discernment of the man who has proved victor in the conflict of life. Wagner's *Parsifal* was only fitted to see the Grail when his green untried innocence had been enlightened and purged by pity and personal proof of life's enticement and by victory over it. Yet we may be sure that Jesus was not speaking in this Beatitude of some vision of God only to be reached after long and arduous moral journeying. He meant a blessing which was possible to the humble souls who listened to His words. The largest vision of holy greatness does

[1] Leighton.

require prolonged moral culture. The perfect discernment demands the perfect purity. But before the consummation, many a disclosure of the will of God is made to the faithful seeker who has attained, by reverence and patience, to sincerity of life and spirit. Later in the Sermon, Jesus speaks of the single eye which brings light into the whole nature of a man. The pure aim of the soul, untainted by any selfish desires, is an essential qualification for all inner vision. Dean Inge, in his moving *Confessio Fidei*, gives these illuminating words: "At the core of our personality is a spark lighted at the altar of God in heaven—a something too holy ever to consent to evil, an inner light which can illuminate our whole being. To purify the eyes of the understanding by constant discipline, to detach ourselves from hampering worldly or fleshly desires, to accustom ourselves to ascend in heart and mind to the kingdom of the eternal values which are the thoughts and purposes of God—this is the quest of the mystic and the scheme of his progress through his earthly life. It carries with it its own proof and justification, in the increasing clearness and certainty with which the truths of the invisible world are revealed to him who diligently seeks for them." [1]

That immediate revelation of God to the human soul is a mystical experience not to be gained by the casual and shallow-hearted. While it is "a real passing of faith into sight," it is not something beyond the range of the ordinary mortal. No lines of rank or education are drawn to exclude any. All are educated in spiritual reality who hold communion with God. All are of royal rank who stand with Christ as heirs of God. Some of our most familiar household emotions bring us directly into the Presence Chamber. Warm sympathies

[1] *Outspoken Essays*, vol. ii. pp. 14–15.

for our fellow-men do much to cleanse our heart from selfishness and make the vision of the Divine sympathy more real. And all true parents know the mystic, indescribable inspirations that come to us in the sweet sanctities of family life and in the innocence and affection of young children. What can more surely lead to the vision of life's meaning and sacredness, and to God, the Source of all affection? Love ever touches the heart to finer issues, and in the measure of that love we discern that Presence which is never far from any one of us, because in it we live and move and have our being. In that process the whole world is re-created. To such moments of our life as are pure of heart are visions given which are a foretaste of that which eye hath not seen but which God is revealing unto us by His Spirit.

> "I think how I should view the earth and skies
> And sea, when once again my brow was bared
> After Thy healing, with such different eyes.
> O world, as God has made it. All is beauty:
> And knowing this is love, and love is duty." [1]

[1] Browning, "The Guardian Angel."

CHAPTER XII

THE AFFINITIES OF THE PEACEMAKER

"Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God."—MATT. v. 9.

THE insight of Dante may help us to interpret this Beatitude. On the Third Terrace of the Cleansing Mount, where Anger is purged away, the embodiment of the virtue opposite to anger is a spirit so self-effacing that it hides itself in its own brightness, in contrast to the evil spirit which lurks in the darkness of its own sullen fumes. This feature points to Meekness as the virtue. Also the illustrations of the virtue are all of the same quality—Mary, Pisistratus, and the martyr Stephen. One expects to hear the Angel pronounce the Beatitude on the meek, but instead we are surprised to hear, "Blessed are the Peacemakers who know not evil wrath."[1] The interest of this lies in the key it gives to the Beatitude employed. It is no more than the simple negation of the vice. But it expresses that the real cause of the world's broken peace is "evil wrath," distinguished from that noble anger which is part of every complete human character. Earlier, on this Terrace, Dante has himself exemplified the virtue of right anger in his denunciation of the strife and bloodshed brought about by the Papal Church, which ought to have been the chief reconciler.[2] Dante deliberately chose the benediction to indicate that evil wrath is at the heart

[1] *Purg.* xvii. 40–69. [2] *Ibid.* xvi. 106–129.

of all human hostility and conflict, and his choice is most illuminating.

Men do not quarrel, nations do not go to war, through mere love of strife. They have no liking for disturbed and embittered relations. When philosophers of a certain type glorify war, it is not for itself, but for some alleged noble end it serves. It energizes a nation, they say. Without it nations rot in inglorious ease. And truly, as opposed to an abject mental and moral lethargy, war is comparatively noble. But the fallacy is to suppose that warlike adventures are the only alternative to this low-minded materialism. Peace hath its victories no less renowned than War. The enterprises set upon the advancement and enlightenment, the enfranchisement and redemption, of humanity can enlist and exercise man's most chivalrous valour. Also, wars are not initiated out of any philanthropic motive. They arise from national bad temper. In social life, individuals do not quarrel because they like it. Some injury is, they suppose, done to them; their desires or opinions, their freedom or advantage, are opposed or thwarted; they wax wrathful and the strife follows. Ecclesiastical strife is supposed to be animated by the desire to compel men and nations to their own good or even salvation, but it may be more easily demonstrated that church jealousy and desire for dominance is nearer the heart of the mischief, culminating in evil wrath. Between nations the same process on the large scale produces the same effect, but more disastrously. The legitimate desire for more trade or more territory for the sake of national expansion, or the illegitimate ambition of megalomania, is opposed by other nations, either because of a natural fear or a groundless suspicion, or because of a similar ambition on their part. Thus national pride is inflamed, evil wrath is begotten, a rivalry of

armaments begins, and the result is the precipitation of a deadly conflict which brings to both victor and vanquished untold disaster, which thrusts civilization back appreciably towards chaos, and discredits the kingdom of goodwill for a generation. God's Name is blasphemed, and men and angels weep. These facts are being written on our mind to-day in letters of torturing fire.

The peacemaker is more than one who has cast out this evil wrath from his own heart, who is personally free from its pollution and self-torture. He has gone beyond this to an endeavour to exorcize it from the whole world and to promote peace wherever possible. He seeks to be a maker of others' peace as well as a lover of his own, and to pursue his neighbour's good even at the expense of his own tranquillity. And the happy issue of this fine, self-sacrificing activity of the peacemaker is more than the vision of God given to the pure of heart—though it is closely akin to it—even the transformation into the likeness of God, "for they shall be called the children of God." Wherever reality is understood, among deep-sighted men and in the presence of the angels of God, they shall be approved as akin in nature and spirit to the Eternal Father of mankind. All men by their creation are His offspring, His children, but these have truly qualified for the title, have made good their birthright.

All action which seeks to remove strife from human intercourse and to substitute co-operation and brotherhood, merits and gains this benediction. In ordinary human activity the demand for peacemakers, the opportunities for reconciling differences, are never far to seek. Christ would have His servants go about in that spirit. "When you enter a house first say, Peace be to this house," not in any official way, ordaining peace, but in a beautiful, kindly way, desiring it, loving

it, working it. Seldom a day passes without need for the skilled peacemaker to turn away evil wrath before it gets beyond all bounds and passes on to violence or tragedy. Some chosen spirits have both the will and the inward fitness for this delicate undertaking, and they earn that blessing which they value more than life. They have the power of getting to the root of the evil and bringing a radical remedy, which is something more than the surface reconciliation which can be brought about for the time being by a natural and humorous geniality. Humour is often a most valuable auxiliary in the process, but has no depth for vital needs. Others turn away from the task saying it is a thankless business, while others still lightly undertake the duty with little or no fitness, and do more harm than good. But no one can be a right human without the peacemaking impulse. To leave strife to take its own way is to fail in elementary duty. Those who are unable to help in this cause where every man counts ought to seek persistently for the fitness, as a doctor seeks for more efficiency when he stands helpless before sickness and suffering. The search for the peacemaking faculty would lead many to the most vital experience of their life, before the face of Him who is the eternal Reconciler. Any person who does not want to be a peacemaker should search his heart to ask if he himself is reconciled to God.

Men with the heart and aptitude for peacemaking are required in industrial and social life. What are unhappily called "the classes" need fundamentally reconciling, so that rich and poor, and all the grades between, masters and servants in all their variety, may know each other as brothers in one family, as members one of another. Effective reconcilers must know social conditions, actual and possible; must

understand the working of " economic forces " so far as possible. Even more essential is it to know the human side of these forces and be able to commend them to all concerned. No man who has the knowledge should be neglectful of his calling to be a peacemaker. To withhold valuable counsel when the world cries out for it, still more to shut up the fountains of sympathy and of service, is a human scandal. The idea that any part of a nation can flourish on the destruction or crippling of any other part is criminally blind. In a true commonwealth, brain and brawn must be co-workers, with blood-ties between them firmly acknowledged. The various kinds of labour must each have its recognized place in the general good, in mutual respect leading on to the best good of all in mutual affection. Only so can social chasms be bridged over, or filled up, when the good of one is known to be the good of all, and each seeks the other's good. That means practical Christianity, and would be confessed as such were it once in operation. Christian men who know their relation in the family of God are the efficient dispersers of unnatural divisions and antagonisms. Let them in the name of the Highest act upon all that is noblest in their impulse, and the blessings of the peacemaker will abide among us.

The natural extension is from personal and social relations to world relations, where the call for peacemakers is more pressing than ever. Many are inclined to think that, during those years of monstrous war which still cast their sinister shadow on all our ways, the passion and art of the peacemaker were extinct, and that during the years since they have taken a very small part in actual life. Many human facts of the present give too much ground for the suspicion. Yet it ignores other facts no less evident. The vast majority of those who had part in the war desired nothing so

much as that the war was to end war, by removing its causes. We saw princes, presidents, statesmen, and people, soldiers and sailors from all parts of the world, workers at our ships and forges, journalists and preachers of every kind and quality, united to rid the world of that evil system of government which was the fountain and origin of the inhuman catastrophe. A great hope surged in the mind of the race, sustained and inspired by the vision of a new Manhood established on a firm basis of human solidarity. And all who discerned in that vast conflict this noble hope, and were animated by that deep desire, were truly pursuing the path of the peacemaker, and so far, they proved themselves akin to Him who is the Father of all men, children of the God of peace.

Outside these blessings, exposed to the curse which they bear as well as bring, were those who pursued other ends of selfish personal or national ambitions; eager exploitation even of human suffering and sacrifice for personal greed; wilfully ignorant opposition to even the legitimate national spirit of other nations; hysterical and spurious patriotism. All these and the iniquities they perpetrate detract from the peacemaking enthusiasm, and blight the blessing that belongs to it. The fact that we are compelled to recognize these diabolic elements still at work among the peoples makes the need insistent that the doors of human life shall be opened wide that the peacemakers may enter into the deep heart of nations. Criminal selfishness which produces strife and bloodshed can only be cast out by the incoming of a mightier and nobler passion for goodwill among men. No peace worthy of the name, no settlement that can last, can be manufactured by politicians destitute of that passion. Nor can any help come from combinations of men, national or international, animated by some other passion, such as class hatred. The pro-

ducers of goodwill among men must first be produced by it. A genuine democracy is the form of government which depends most completely on self-conquest over all ill-will. Men have to learn to live with those we have not seen by cultivating the harmonious spirit with those we have seen. Only by actual pursuing of peace in the more immediate circles of life can our purpose of peace make its way to the larger circles. But from that veritable pursuit of practical reconciliation will spring that more charitable spirit which by its Divine force will undermine the causes which keep men and nations apart in mutual suspicion and hostility, and will build up the New Jerusalem of those who are co-partners of the human commonwealth and sharers in the abiding riches of life.

The ideal is noble beyond conception, and the inspiration by which it can be realized is equally beyond thought, but both ideal and inspiration are centred in our Lord's discernment of the blessed operation of this peacemaking passion. The immediate and the final issue for the reconcilers themselves is a true affinity with the unseen Lord of Life. They shall be called, because they are, the children of God. Only an extreme poverty in our conception of the nature and glory of the Deity can empty this gracious assurance of its wonder and beauty. The passion for human peace is allied with the Infinite yearning that gives meaning to this world's history and which receives its fullest demonstration in the Incarnation and the Cross.

CHAPTER XIII

THE REWARD OF THE PERSECUTED

"Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."—MATT. v. 10–12.

"Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. . . . Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for in like manner did their fathers to the false prophets."—LUKE vi. 22, 23, 26.

WHEN Matthew turns from the third person to the second, he brings his version more fully into line with that of Luke, which has been throughout a direct address to persons present, or an apostrophe to those absent, but well known to both speaker and hearers. Spiritual accord is perfect between the two, and the woe of Luke serves to make the situation more distinct and dramatic. Jesus contemplates what is sure to overtake those who should be faithful to Him in days and years to come. Persecution, reviling, evil-speaking, hatred, reproach, ostracizing, casting out of their name—their name as Christians—should be their lot. And in it and because of it, they should be profoundly blessed.

Our Lord gives no warrant to those who consider themselves persecuted at the least touch of opposition

to their opinions or person. The blessing is not guaranteed just because men are persecuted, any more than because they are poor, or mourners, or hungry. Here the conditions, which are mainly implied in the previous Beatitudes, are made explicit. The evil has to be spoken falsely. Men may meet with much opposition, much annoyance and contempt in life, which they are apt to call persecution, but which is due rather to their want of tact and consideration for others, to a discourteous temper, an aggressive disposition. They do right things in a wrong way—a provoking, stupid way. Their good is evil spoken of through their fault. St. Peter gives the warning that no man shall suffer as a busybody in other men's matters. This is thankworthy, he says, if a man for conscience toward God endure griefs, suffering wrongfully.[1]

In every time, those who are outstanding in their conviction or fidelity, without being in any way eccentric or unduly opinionated, may expect hostility. "Public opinion, a vulgar, impertinent, anonymous tyrant, deliberately makes life unpleasant for any one who is not content to be the average man." [2] And in the more concentrated experience of the Christian life, men who conspicuously act on their inward conviction of what is true and right will surely rouse dislike and hostility in some perverted souls. The very existence of goodness stirs the worst in them, now as in the days when the pure and holy Son of Man was so hated. Goodness rebukes badness, and badness resents it. Also, men who have a larger vision of truth beyond that which is common or traditional may look to have their names cast out as evil by those who regard any variation from tradition as vicious and dangerous. Periodically, one hears of men of broadest mind, most charitable spirit,

[1] 1 Pet. ii. 19. [2] Dean Inge, *Outspoken Essays*, vol. i.

and true saintly character, being subjected to violent persecution and threats of excommunication. Sometimes they have been cast out of the Church that they love with holy passion, and only when they have passed beyond human praise or blame, and when the truth for which they stood has been vindicated, do the Churches repent in dust and ashes. Many forms does persecution take from age to age, but the evil heart that prompts it does not change, and it can even now provide efficient substitutes for the thumbscrew and the rack. The spirit of the persecutor, the inquisitor, is kept alive by perverted goodness, or malicious badness, and its track through the centuries is marked by tears and blood.

Surely though slowly a better spirit arises, the larger mind, the wider understanding, the deeper charity. The public conscience has become more discerning of genuine goodness, yet in every age one who is of pronounced Christian character does challenge all that is bestial and inhuman, and can be fairly sure of hostility. Men may avoid hostility by their freedom from all censoriousness and ostentation of piety ; by their geniality and gracious tact ; by their genuine sincerity. The preacher of modern spirit may rouse little or no animosity because he has too deep a sense of the fidelity of those who hold the earlier tradition to ever do violence to it ; because he can blend all that is valid in the old with all that is verifiable in the new, so that he carries men on insensibly to the larger understanding.

But there is another possible explanation of their peaceable life which Luke suggests : " Woe unto you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets." Men may be too feeble and pliable, too undecided in principle or conduct, to be thought worth persecuting. There is so little that is challenging in their virtue that men never notice it. Men who can

do nothing but feebly smile when vile things are spoken and sacred things are repudiated, who have nothing to say when the faith in which they were brought up is scorned and slandered, are not worth powder and shot. And their poor skin will go down, without a scar, to the position of the neutrals in Dante's *Inferno*, whom neither heaven nor hell could tolerate. They lose their place in any realm of human worth. They are not fit for the blessing of the persecuted. Also, a preacher may be so ready to compromise with error, he may sit so loosely to his "convictions," that he may wriggle his mean way through all honest opposition by being false to the Lord of Truth. He preserves his popularity and loses his soul. And the fact that he does not lose his popularity may witness to his congregation's insincerity or deadness. Men may cease to persecute not because they are too good or wise, but because they are too shallow or indifferent.

If the Church of God was more militant against badness and falsehood, more searching into the unethical forms of current Christianity, would it escape enmity? If it was more aggressive in its conviction that war is essentially inhuman and unchristian, if the Churches rose in organized might and said there shall be no "next war," would they encounter no hatred and hostility? Would the Press have no rancorous words for them? Would venomous minds have no poison gas to discharge? Would the interests that profit by war have no profane banners to lift, no stones to cast? The answer is not just to hand. All we know is that when the Churches have been most earnest they have been most hated, and the Lord of Peace Himself was hounded to the Cross. It may be that the spirit of men has been modified, and that evil men could not work any serious persecution. But the history of

the past few years does not encourage too great confidence. And whether men could persecute or not, the duty of the Church is to make its character and action more commanding, not against makers of war alone, but against makers of all sorts of vileness. The call is for every honest man, in the Church or out of it, to take a brave part in bringing a better, kinder world into existence. And if suffering comes when our whole being is astir for the honour of the Christ, we may welcome it. Persecution is never to be sought, nor is it to be too carefully avoided. If it results from fidelity in the way of righteousness, "blessed are ye." It may be accepted, not just with dull-hearted patience, but with rejoicing. There can be no mistaking our Lord's thought. "Rejoice and be exceeding glad. Rejoice ye in that day and leap for joy." One of our missionaries tells that, when in a Chinese anti-Christian riot a stone was thrown causing blood to flow from his brow, he felt glad and proud that he was counted worthy to give a little blood in his Master's service. "Great is your reward in heaven," Jesus declares, not postponing the blessing to some other world, but establishing it as permanent beyond all that can destroy it, where all spiritual treasures are eternally stored. The Kingdom of the heavens which is promised is the realm where all these spiritual valuations are valid, where they wait for no earthly events, even the most startling. The persecuted proves his moral worth by the hostility he encounters. His right place is in that new Order of noble souls who count not their life dear unto them if they may finish their course of faithful service for God and man. The privileges and blessings of that new Order are his. He belongs to the Kingdom. The moral forces of that Kingdom which comes not with observation are on his side and will vindicate his fidelity.

Significantly Jesus here unfolds some of these privileges. Any man persecuted for his righteousness belongs to the lineage of the prophets. He stands in the line of the great ones of the earth, beyond all other dignity. He is one with the spiritual heroes who saw the purpose of the Eternal and were faithful to it. He, too, is called to have his part in making known the mind of the Father, to forthtell the Divine will whether it relates to the past, the present, or the future. And here faithful life, no less than eloquent and burning speech, establishes a man's place in this honourable succession.

And with this noble company of the faithful of all ages, Jesus identifies Himself and His cause. He sums up all the reasons for which man may suffer persecution in the intimate words, "for My sake." This is the first suggestion in the Sermon of our Lord's consciousness of His central position for human faith and loyalty. Luke says, "for the Son of man's sake." Men suffer not only with the prophets but with Him in whose person all highest manhood stands revealed, and the heart of the Godhead. So persecuted they Jesus who was before us. To whom be glory for ever and ever.

The utmost ingenuity cannot twist this benediction into any semblance of apocalyptic promise. The blessing lies entirely in the inner consciousness of the faithful Christian. It makes no appeal to the sensuous or materialistic. The happy realization that he is worthy of mention in the eternal roll-call of the prophets, because he shares their spirit and purpose, will receive nothing from any catastrophic transformation of the present world. And this is in harmony with the other blessings declared on the pure of heart, the humble, the merciful, the peacemakers. We are, therefore, entitled, if not impelled, to interpret the whole of this sublime chain of virtues on the same exalted plane of idea, where they receive their truest fulfilment.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BENEFICENT ACTIVITY OF THE BEATITUDE SPIRIT

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."—MATT. v. 13–16.

IN these comprehensive Beatitudes the qualities which make for life's blessedness are made plain. Jesus now goes on to say how effective in the world is that type of character He eulogizes, and how essential for mankind's purity and progress. It cannot be dispensed with, for nothing can take its place as a beneficent world force. Therefore, faithful men are not to be driven out of the field of human intercourse by persecution or hardship, but are to be made more competent in that sphere.

To describe the influence of the Christian virtues in the world, Jesus makes use of two symbols: the one homely and familiar, drawn directly from the operations of the kitchen, but suggestive of wider national customs; the other familiar too, but leading on the imagination to the widest spaces of existence. The two images together express the Christian ideal which every piece of practical religion helps to make real. They contain at least the germ of our Lord's faith that these Beatitudes are of world-wide significance. So confident is He of

their value and enduring power that He can trust His largest hopes and purposes to their spirit in action. "Ye are the salt of the earth. Ye are the light of the world."

To suggest the intimate and penetrating quality of the religion of Jesus, salt provided a most forcible and intelligible symbol. All nations of the ancient world knew its value, enhanced as it was by its rarity. The Greeks and Romans so appreciated its qualities that they called it Divine, dear to the gods. And like most other peoples they early adopted it to represent most desirable qualities in the human spirit and action. The old Greeks called wit the salt of conversation, and Attic salt became proverbial. It was a current proverb in our Lord's day that "Salt is good." Among the Hebrews, salt was comparatively plentiful, but the supplies were carefully conserved. In Ezekiel's vision, parts of the Dead Sea region were exempted from the healing operation of the waters which issued from the Sanctuary. The marshes were maintained for the national necessities, and given still to salt.[1]

The qualities of salt made it an emblem of purity and incorruptibility, and thus it was given a vital place in Hebrew religious customs. The wholesome salt was made essential in all sacrifices, but honey and leaven, which are in themselves unstable and corruptible, are expressly forbidden.[2] The sanctity it thus acquired was quite naturally transferred to meals taken together, in which salt was always present. The "Salt of the Covenant" established a bond of guest friendship which was scrupulously observed. Among Greek and Persians, as well as among all Semites, infidelity to the salt of hospitality was regarded as particularly heinous.

In applying this symbol of salt to character, Jesus begins, as He always loves to do, with the most homely

[1] Ezek. xlvii. 11. [2] Lev. ii. 11.

use of it in the preparation of food. The whole world knows the value which salt has in giving taste and interest to food, bringing out its true flavour and quality, making it attractive. The suggestion is unmistakable that true virtue gives a right savour to human life and intercourse, delivering it from insipidity and mediocrity. As a man's palate knows the taste of salt, so his heart knows genuine goodness when he sees it. Nothing appeals more convincingly to the natural mind than this goodness, and those who have to do with it most closely, mingling it with their constant experience, find it most satisfying. The modicum of truth in the cynical saying that no man is a hero to his valet, is drowned in its own falsehood.

Only decided character, of which humility is the fundamental characteristic, can have this wholesome effect in daily intercourse. Without the true taste of the Beatitude spirit, men and women are as insipid and unappetizing as food without salt. Those whose character tastes of nothing in particular, who have no mind, conscience, or principle to speak of, have much to answer for in the dulness that afflicts humanity. Virtue of the Sermon on the Mount quality makes everywhere for variety, individuality, and spontaneity.

But the main thought in the mind of Jesus would be of an even more urgent temper. Salt does more than save from insipidity. It preserves from corruption. It lays hold upon each fibre and particle of animal tissue and imparts a resisting quality which is effective against all natural forces tending towards ferment and decay. Its penetrating power is its chief characteristic, and in this it is a most fitting symbol of the working of the religion of Jesus. Practical faithfulness to the ideal of truth and goodness keeps human life and society sweet and wholesome. It is a protective activity,

deeply penetrating, in the very spirit and life of a community, a church, a nation. Its sphere is the individual consciousness, and from that centre, the whole life of humanity. Christian souls, faithful men, in every generation when licentiousness abounded, have been known as the salt of that age. The Hebrew prophets were the saving influence of their nation. The Puritans had their failings and extravagances, but all historians agree they were the salt of their time. And genuinely good people, in families, churches, politics, international affairs, surely take their place among the purifying, preserving forces of the world. And the innermost secret of the all-pervading power of true character is that it is animated by the sacrificial virtue of the Christ. It brings the saving might of God to bear in human affairs. That human-Divine influence must be deeply in humanity, as the salt brine enters into the substance. "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another." [1] Take into the inner being that salt of the peaceful principle of Jesus which can protect the character from all evil ambitions which destroy peace. In the same connection Jesus compares the action of salt with that of fire, and the two symbols are interchanged. "Every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." Following as these images do on the sternly drawn picture of the fire that never shall be quenched, the need for positive inward virtue to the point of sacrifice is powerfully enforced.

Hence arises the quick appeal for a genuine uncompromising quality in all Christian virtue, urgently maintained against all deterioration. Salt may lose its savour, becoming less and less effective for its purpose, until finally it ceases to be salt. The people were familiar with adulterated salt, which for the sake of larger profit

[1] Mark ix. 50.

was passed off as the real article ; also with salt which had lost its saline quality under stress of exposure to the elements. These facts illustrate the fate which may befall in character. In the nature of the case, Christian virtue has to be in the world, because there is the sphere of its action. Mingled with human life, it is ever in danger of taking on the worst qualities of the world. It must be exposed to irreligious forces, and may be so carelessly exposed that the Christian spirit evaporates. The true taste of religion is lost, or remains only as a feeble tincture which only serves to make clear the essential loss. Men cease to be decidedly humble, meek, or merciful ; are no longer conspicuously desirous of righteousness or purity of heart. So far as that deterioration goes, they become worthless for all Christian uses. They merit and they gain the contempt of men. The common man recognizes the marks of Jesus in one who calls Him Master, and if he finds a professed Christian as grasping, unscrupulous, unrelenting as irreligious men, he is quick to repudiate him. Like worthless salt, he is cast out and trodden under foot. A Church which bears the Holy Name on its banners, in its creeds, but not in its spirit and activity, is an offence to man and God.

One other reason Jesus gives against failure in Christian virtue, in His question—If the salt has become tasteless (*μωρανθῇ*), in what way or by what means (*ἐν τίνι*) shall it be salted ? What is the subject of the verb *ἁλισθήσεται* ? The thing to be salted, or the worthless salt itself ? The question applies to character equally in either reading. The extreme difficulty in reimpregnating any substance with salt, as of restoring its lost perfume to a rose, symbolizes the almost hopeless difficulty of bringing back Christian enthusiasm to one who has been possessed by it and has lost it. It

is not impossible for such a one to recover Christian earnestness from the Divine source of all life and virtue. But the New Testament most solemnly urges how hard it is. Let no man put his trust in that possibility.

A far better sense is given if it be understood that Jesus still has in mind the earth, and its need of Christian principle, and the general body of disciples and apostles as the means of imparting the principle. If the true Christian quality is lost in the Church, then where can one hope for the Christianizing of mankind? The Jewish nation had been called to be the spiritual salt of the earth, and these words may well be taken as our Lord's first recorded prediction of the coming rejection of His faithless fellow-countrymen. "It is no longer good for anything but to be cast out and trodden on by passers-by." [1] Individuals who become worthless may be dispensed with, and their places taken by others. But if the chosen community, whether Jewish or Christian, loses its right quality, how shall the Holy purpose be fulfilled? Every Christian disciple who stultifies himself by loss of sympathy with the purpose of God may reflect on the fact that he is helping on the general stultification of all those who are called to be, and ought to be, the salt of their own generation and of the entire life of men on the earth. How shall the Divine purpose prosper if those privileged to know it prove false?

Having spoken of the all-penetrating quality of the Christian Salt, Jesus next symbolizes the all-encompassing power of Christianity as Light. Human character fashioned on the Beatitudes will be like that universal element in which all living things have their being, like that glory and mystery which gives the earth its beauty and fascination, and weaves the living garment of the Deity. That inexpressible wonder of earthly

[1] Weymouth, *N.T.*, *in loc.*

existence, evoked by Divine fiat from primeval chaos, is a fitting symbol of true Christian virtue because it is the universal Revealer and Quickener.

Light reveals. Nothing is hid from the eyes of it. Its shining dispels the obscurity and darkness of the night, and discloses the grandeur and beauty of hill and valley, meadow, mere, and firth. The light breaks, and swells, and overflows the world. Beneath its glowing kiss each flower lifts its head, and lays bare the deeps of its heart ; each exquisite stamen, pistil, and honey gland trembles before its Lord. And in very fact, this entrancing action beautifully symbolizes the influence in the world of right Christian character. Every achievement of the moral ideal, partial as it must be, is a source of revelation. It helps to enlighten human darkness. It guides to the highest good, and reveals the greatness of possibility. It discloses the virtue and excellence of our common life, and unfolds the wide-reaching purpose of the Highest. The supreme revelation of the Soul of the universe, the All-mighty and All-merciful Father, was made in the human character of the perfect Son. And in all generations, human personality is necessary to the revelation of the infinite moral excellence and passion which are in God. Light itself is invisible. We only see it as it is reflected from earthly objects, and as its pure white beam is broken up into the phantasmagoria of colour which is the beauty of the world. It is only made bearable to mortal eyes by being mediated through cloud and atmosphere. So also the perfect purity of the uncreated Light in the Godhead can never be apprehended by our feeble moral sense except as it is brought near to us in mortal form, in the human beauty of the Man of men, and in those who faithfully follow His spirit. The highest praise put by Jesus upon human integrity and graciousness

is that they reveal their Source. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." To His followers Jesus is the moral equivalent of the Supreme Lord of life, and the direct inspiration of every strong, brave, God-illumined human character.

Also, Light is the Quickener. Light had to be brought forth before Life could begin to be, but its beams becoming active in the new-created world, the pageant of life followed in ordered course—plant, animal, man; and in man, the beginning of a new creative process of the light intellectual—instinct, mind, conscience, spirit.

> "All day Earth waded in the sun
> Free-bosomed; and when night begun,
> Spelt in the secret stars.
> Day unto Day did utter speech,
> Night unto night the knowledge teach,
> Barred in its golden bars.
>
> And last Man's self, the little world
> Where was Creation's semblance furled,
> Rose at the linking nod:
> For the first world, the moon and sun
> Swung orbed. That human second one
> Was dark and waited God." [1]

All plants live in and by the light. They cannot put forth verdure or fruit except when bathed in this vital element. The food essential to the life of man is the gift of the sunshine. And deeper still, the most mysterious and vital potency of the light lies in its invisible beams, in its ultra-violet rays with their subtle chemical force, transforming and quickening.

And truly as light meets the first need of the earth and of man upon it, so true character and living virtue

[1] F. Thompson, "Carmen Genesis."

is the first requirement of the moral world. By this alone can the life-giving reality which Christ brought to the world be perpetuated and made effective. The enlightenment of the inner life is the first and the last essential of all moral renovation and spiritual progress. Truth, Knowledge of God and of all things in Him, must be at the root of human salvation. And these are also its final consummation. Those who live in the spirit of His sayings, Jesus declares, shall be the source of enlightenment to the world, centres of spiritual radiance, because they reveal their Source in the Divine Life. Genuine truth of character helps on the great process of mental and moral quickening of human hearts. The innermost secret of all such influence lies in the unseen personality, the soul within, the life hidden with Christ in God. This secret power ranks with the mightiest spiritual forces. It reveals, enlightens, quickens. It leads on all rudimentary moral sense to fuller development. It pervades feeble struggling virtue with victorious energy.

Christian virtue being indispensable to men and to God's cause among them, as the light is to this earth, Jesus would have its revealing, quickening potency fully active in all human affairs. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." He means, first, the light you possess, which has been entrusted to you ; and next, the light which you are in character and endeavour. The two are one, and can never be separated. The genuine spirit of the Beatitudes in a man's life reveals its source in God Himself. It quickens the soul of men to behold their God who is Light and was made manifest in Jesus. And the knowledge of God which is thus bestowed is an impartation of the life eternal to a world which dies without it. Nothing

else can inspire the enthusiasm for virtue in communities and in individuals. And nothing but enthusiastic virtue can be compared with "a city set upon a hill which cannot be hid." As Jerusalem stood in familiar reality, flashing back from its towers and pinnacles and temple majesty the glorious light of day, raying forth its guiding, cheering beams when night has spread its pall of darkness over the landscape, so Christian character in the life of a community, a Church, an individual, will surely be. It reflects the splendour of Divine truth, and it has an inward radiance of its own. The conception is inspiring for all Christendom. Yet it at once descends upon the individual obligation. Jerusalem, shaking herself from the dust and putting on her beautiful garments, is the combination of the adornments of her sons and her daughters. The virtue of individual fidelity is essential to the inspiring larger reality of Churches and of nations. It must therefore never allow itself to be hidden by feebleness or compromise. Salt which does not taste, and light which does not shine, are alike misnomers. A lamp lighted and then put under a bushel is an absurdity. Men never do that when they light their lamp. They put it on a stand where it can give light to all that are in the house. Yet in Christian character men do commit the absurdity of allowing their Christian spirit to be hidden by all kinds of mental reservations, hesitations which smother up the light as under a bushel, so that the light can only shine through a few chinks. The remedy for all such ineffectual character is not an effort to display our virtue, but a finer, deeper quality in the virtue. Keep the inward light well supplied with Divine truth, and give it room to shine by keeping away from the altar of the heart every inferior interest. Keep these legitimate but lower concerns in their place, for out of their place they

hinder the Christian light from shining. Give room for the inward light, and it will manifest itself in all these human interests, and the whole life will be radiant with a light which never was on sea or land. The character must be clear and unmistakable, convincing by its own quality and force. Hesitation and equivocation are an embarrassment and tend towards futility. Nothing but free, forthright allegiance to God and to His living ideal can be effective for the moral illumination and quickening of mankind. But this shall never fail. When the Holy Church throughout the world shall acknowledge the Father of an infinite majesty, His honourable, true, and only Son, also the Holy Ghost the Comforter ; when the truth and reality of Christianity fills the mind and heart of all Christians—then God will be known as the Source of Light and His followers as the children of Light. Quickened at heart by communion with the Ever-living and Ever-loving, beholding His face and understanding His purpose, Christendom will be the City of Light which cannot be hid.

Let it be freely recognized that the Beatitudes constitute a high calling. Their ideal is established by the Master's word and life. When a Bampton lecturer declares that the Sermon says no word as to the way of realizing the perfection it preaches, that it remains still a law, giving commands to the will, but leaving the will to find its way without guidance to this perfect type,[1] one marvels. Truly it would be a mockery to place so lofty a height before weak and sinful men, without some spiritual force available to make possible the climbing. But these Beatitudes are encompassed and pervaded by spiritual force, a deep sense of the Father, and the spirit of the holy, chivalrous personality that proclaims

[1] Dean Strong, *Bampton Lecture*, 1895.

them. They are the outcome of His human experience in which He had made proof of every principle He enunciated. Even apart from the person of the Speaker, standing as an anonymous utterance, the Sermon carries a most impressive rational and spiritual appeal. Its ethical standard is worthy of all acceptation, to be received with enthusiastic acclamation, and maintained with ardour and fidelity. It stands out of all comparison with any known code of morality, Jewish, Greek, Roman, or Teutonic, and commends itself to all discernment as reasonable and right. But the nature of the Person who gives it vastly enhances the ideal. Never before or since was a Law proclaimed by one who had himself realized it. The virtue of the great lawgivers was that they discerned some advance upon current conduct which was desirable, and were able to enact legislation which guided the action of men in the right direction. But Jesus gave much more than a law. He laid down no enactments, but presented an ideal principle, a religion, a new way of life, of which His whole personality was an embodiment. He was the ideal He established. He spoke from His own realization of its incommunicable virtue and blessedness. And the gospel of His Kingdom is that He who so passionately commended this new way of living is the same Jesus who enters into our nature to change our weakness into strength, and who renews our whole life with cleansing, healing power. He sets up no cold ideal, in the spirit of an impersonal philosopher, but with warm humanity calls men to Himself as to One who is absolutely committed to the high privilege of this communion with God and man, and who will be, to every faithful soul who undertakes the noble quest, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

PART III

THE OLD LAW AND THE NEW RELIGION

Matt. v. 17–48,

Chapter XV. The Fulfilment of the Old in the New.
,, XVI. The New Thought of Murder.
,, XVII. The New Purity.
,, XVIII. The Marriage of True Souls.
,, XIX. The New Truthfulness.
,, XX. The Christian Retaliation.
,, XXI. The New Chivalry.

CHAPTER XV

THE FULFILMENT OF THE OLD IN THE NEW

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."—MATT. v. 17–20.

FROM this point to the end of the chapter we find Jesus deeply concerned with the Jewish Law. The Law and the Prophets constituted the entire religious system of Judaism. They represented different tendencies in the national life, though they blended in the one piety. The books, which are chiefly legalistic, have running through them a prophetic element; and those which are mainly prophetic spend themselves in urging a true obedience to the will of God found in the Law, even while they roundly denounce the exaltation of external and ritual matters over the internal and moral. The purpose of Jesus was to enlarge and deepen both Law and Prophets and so to fulfil them.

The Law, as it confronted Jesus in His youth and manhood, was like some great cathedral which enshrines the devotion of centuries. The varied history of Israel is built into it. In Exodus we have remnants of the earliest legislation made for a primitive people recently

escaped from a benumbing slavery. Practical directions are given as needs arise, and to these have been added more developed laws belonging to a more advanced culture, embodying ethical principles of lasting significance, such as we have in the Decalogue. The Book of Deuteronomy recasts the older codes in a twofold interest: first, to centralize religion in the one sanctuary at Jerusalem, in opposition to the many local shrines which had sprung up in sympathy with idolatry; second, in favour of inward, spiritual worship. The later books, led by Ezekiel, and followed by Leviticus, placed much greater stress upon ritual. Ezekiel's ideal temple and the minute elaborations for its worship might tend to the hardening of the ritual idea, and to some loss of spiritual enthusiasm, but the description throughout is inspired with zeal for inward purity. A clean heart and a right spirit are central for this prophet. The Book of Leviticus, although it is mainly ritualistic, has constantly in view the preservation of the idea of Divine holiness and of man's purity before God. But, in later times, the nobler elements of this legislation are overloaded by rabbinical casuistries, dealing with specific cases which arose or might arise in carrying out the Law. This legalism existed in our Lord's day mainly as oral tradition, and we gain knowledge of its intolerable tyranny from the Jewish Talmud, in which the tradition and the continued misdirected zeal of the rabbis took shape after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and from the fragmentary New Testament references to our Lord's contact with it. The nature of these regulations superimposed on the Law may be judged from the sixth book of one section of the Talmud, the Mishna, which has thirty chapters dealing with the washing of vessels alone. The Old Testament law had been sufficiently weighted by these temporary and uninspired additions,

but in this later time they had grown out of all reason and practicality. The Divine gift in the Law had been submerged, and the life of the people was corrupted by subterfuges into which they had been driven to escape the tyranny of this rabbinized law.

Dr. Charles, our leading authority on the literature of these times, in one of his smaller works,[1] appears to minimize the testimony of the prophets in comparison with the writers known as Apocalyptic. He says: "Inasmuch as prophecy had died long before the Christian era, and its place had been taken by apocalyptic, it was from the apocalyptic side of Judaism that Christianity was born." Earlier he writes: "Apocalyptic and not prophecy was the first to grasp the great idea that all history, alike cosmological and spiritual, is a unity—a unity following naturally as a corollary of the unity of God preached by the prophets. Such problems arose inevitably in Israel's belief in monotheism and the righteousness of God." So, after all, prophecy was not dead, since it still survived in spirit. And although an expansion of it appeared in apocalyptic books, it was the surviving prophetic element which gave them their permanent value. The cosmological features seem to be not a wider view of Divine purpose so much as the escape of writers who found little support in this actual world for their unregulated ideas, and so took refuge in other worlds beyond verification. The ethical contact between the apocalyptics and Jesus seems to be due to their common inspiration by the prophets. Jesus plainly went direct to the sources.

The larger work of Dr. Charles[2] shows that most of these extra-Biblical writers, while they indiscriminately glorify the Law, do not altogether neglect the funda-

[1] Dr. Charles, *Between the Testaments*, pp. 32–3, and 24.
[2] *The Oxford Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.*

mental ethics of the prophets, though they hold their spiritual passion in bonds of casuistry. The book of Jubilees (about 135–105 B.C.) exaggerates the finality of the Law of Judaism, declaring it to be valid for ever, "written in the heavenly tablets." Yet the same book contains teaching which, if logically developed, must supplant the Law. The Testimony of the Twelve Patriarchs (close of second century B.C.) declares the universality of the Law as the light which lighteth every man. It also shows a more inward understanding of the Law than was common in Judaism, and it expresses a profound principle in the pregnant saying, "Every man is the Adam of his own soul." The fragment of a Zadokite work (close of first century B.C.) interprets the Song of the Well which the princes digged (Num. xxi. 17, 18) as a celebration of the Law. But the work itself was the outcome of a reformation movement which sprang up in the second century B.C., promoted by priests who called themselves sons of Zadok. They carried on a steady religious revival marked by an intensely ethical spirit. They recognized the value of the prophetic teaching with its spiritual impulse and wider outlook, and exposed the abnormal growth of oral tradition, and charged the Pharisees, the very custodians of the Law, with removing the ancient landmarks and rejecting the commandments of God.

Plainly then, the prophetic tradition can still be drawn upon even by the apocalyptics. Naturally there is a correspondence between some of their ethics and the teaching of Jesus. But between His spiritual principles and their fantastic vagaries there is a wide chasm. He is in lineal descent with the prophets, but He is more intimately in contact with direct inspiration. Nothing in the past of Judaism can explain Him. When Dean Inge says, "The Gospel of Christ was a product of

Jewish soil," the statement is only true in part. No genius can be explained by the land and generation of its birth, least of all supreme spiritual genius. The great souls have commerce with the heavens as well as with the earth, and enter into the presence of eternal inspiration. And in the power of this, Jesus came to fulfil the prophets by freeing them from the baneful overshadowing by the exaggerated Law, thus giving them their rightful place in the religion of the people.

In the very same spirit He came to fulfil the Law, to show its inner principle and abiding value, and to detach its true essence from a degenerate tradition. In one and the same action He confirmed the Law, transformed it, and abrogated it. In criticizing the ancient legislation, He made no distinction, in word, between the moral and the ceremonial, the Law as given by God, and the Law made by rabbinism. Over against all alike He placed His own word: "It was said by them of old time . . . but I say unto you." That is not to say He made no distinction in spirit. His words concerning the Law breathe an ardent enthusiasm which it is impossible to believe could be inspired by anything less than its ethical and spiritual content as God gave it. In this enthusiasm we find the key to interpret the whole declaration as it stands.

When Jesus assures the devotees of the Law that He had not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets, He doubtless had in mind fears which had been stirred in them by His freedom of speech and action. On the principle of charity which He practised before He preached it, He sought to avoid unnecessary "scandal." When the Pharisees were scandalized by His teaching He said, "Every plant which My Father hath not planted must be rooted up." But when it was a question of paying a tax, even against His principles, He paid

it rather than give offence. Sincere devotion to the Law, however mistaken, was too valuable to be lightly regarded. Hence His preliminary assurance that His purpose in relation to their Law and to everything in life was not destructive but constructive.

But beyond this wise caution in presenting truth was our Lord's reverence for the Law, based upon a most penetrating discernment of its spirit and its Divine intention. Moffatt speaks of "the radical antithesis between the new legislation of Jesus and the old jurisprudence." But the antithesis was only between the Jewish rabbi understanding of the Law and His living principles. Jesus found the spirit which made all the difference lying implicit in the ancient Law, both in its moral precepts and its ceremonial. His sensitiveness to the suggestion which the old ritual contained, for the spirit of sacrifice in all generations and for His own supreme sacrifice, may be the best key to His intense words concerning the Law. The manners and ceremonies of the sacrifices were to Him obsolete, but the Divine mind expressed in them was of abiding value and obligation. And because of this deep vision of the principles embodied and adumbrated in the Law, He was able to say that He had come not to destroy but to fulfil.

Jesus came in the way of nature, to fulfil the Law as the flower fulfils the bud and the fruit fulfils the flower. The very imperfection of the earlier stages implies the larger development. And to Jesus the very inadequacy of the Old Testament Law necessitated a further process towards perfection. And coming in the way of nature, He was in the line of all human progress. In all cases where imperfection rather than vicious growth is concerned, the liberating action comes not with violent abruptness but with sweet and beautiful processes

which are in harmony with the whole movement of the generations. "The old order changeth, giving place to new." The ways by which God fulfils Himself are in apparent opposition, but in real harmony. "The systems which are less complete lead of necessity to systems which are more complete. . . . The method is constructive or reconstructive. It is critical in a way like that in which the blossom is critical of the bud, and the bud of the thorn on which it was born. There is a genetic movement in life, higher forms as they appear recapitulating lower forms, and a kindred movement in thought upon the things of life, and neither is subversive, but each is reconstructive. And, being reconstructive, it is critical. And such is the method of the historical spirit, as it works within its wide domains, calling nothing common or unclean, or dead and out of date, but treating all things in relation, first to the problem of their time, and then to that of every time, the problem of eternal truth." [1] These principles, applied so convincingly by the author to the vital movement in great art, poetry, philosophy, and religion, were manifested in Him who in all things sought not to destroy but to fulfil. He combined a whole-hearted reverence for the Law, as a revelation of God's will to that earlier time, with a discerning sense of its limitations. He held Himself free both from those elements which had no obligation in the inward heart, and therefore tended to formalism, if not to insincerity, and from those restrictions which, without any moral ground, divided man from man. He brought every expression of the Law, in the Scriptures and in the all-too-human interpretation of it, to the test of the deeper spirit which the Law itself implicitly demanded before it could be truly kept. His whole mental and spiritual effort was to unfold the latent possibilities

[1] J. R. Cameron, *The Renascence of Jesus.*

in the Law, to rescue it from the dead hand of tradition, and to claim its abiding-place in preparing the way for the perfect Law of liberty.

The difficulty presented by verses 18 and 19 is best solved if the emphasis is still maintained on the word "fulfilled" and its true inward interpretation. The sayings are of a character which suggests, at first sight, the exaggerated importance assigned to the rabbinized law by the apocalyptists. They declared the eternal and universal validity of the Law in its every detail, and Jesus says, "Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled." Therefore some expositors say the words are not an expression of the thought of Jesus, but of the Jewish point of view in those Jewish-Christian circles with which Matthew was most at home and most sympathetic. Some also maintain that here a Jewish rampart has been thrust against the heretical teaching of Paul regarding the Mosaic law. They would therefore omit the verses from the Sermon. But the omission destroys the links of connection between the thought of verses 17 and 20, and leaves them both isolated. Also it offends against the wholesome canon that cuts shall be the last resort of the expositor, as surgery is the last resort of the doctor. Omission is always an easy expedient, but deeper thought is more valiant and more profitable, whether we study great poets like Dante or the New Testament.

Votaw [1] holds that the words have a real nucleus of something said by Jesus on this occasion, but that they have received a certain Jewish-Christian colouring which was not in accord with His other teaching and practice. The question at issue is rather "begged" by the inter-

[1] Article on "Sermon on the Mount," in Hastings' *D.B.* (Extra).

pretation given to the idea of fulfilment. A most careful paraphrase is suggested, which takes the passage as a prophecy that the Jewish Law shall "eventually and actually be completely realized." But he does not say in what way realized—whether in the letter or the spirit. If in the letter, that involves the Judaizing of the whole world—a prospect which the most ultra-Jewish Christian might well refuse to contemplate. If in the spirit is meant, then this suggests another interpretation of the words, which makes the above suppositions unnecessary. Actual and complete realization can only be in the spirit. The words thus paraphrased really set a term to the permanence of the Law, not historically but spiritually. It is to remain in force to all time so long as it remains unfulfilled, but the goal set before men is its fulfilment—"till all be fulfilled," until every implication and intention of the Law comes into force. Not the least part of the Law is to become worthless or obsolete, except by being taken up into a larger reality. Jesus takes the familiar language of the literalists regarding the Law and its permanence, and uses it to express His own conviction that the ideal will of God, primarily for the Jewish nation, shall in all its length and breadth, and inward meaning, be realized in the new spirit of His Kingdom. Until it is realized in a nation or an individual, no part of it can be treated as superfluous till the end of time. The Law could not be fulfilled by any catastrophic event, such as many seek to maintain that Jesus had in mind. No rise or fall of kingdoms, no spectacular phenomena in heaven or on earth, could bring it one iota nearer to fulfilment. All must come in human discernment and obedience. Point by point the Law was destined to pass away, as point by point they are included in a better and deeper principle and transcended by it. In our Lord's day

much of the detail of the old Law had already lost validity for His followers. They had learnt from the Master to disregard them in obedience to a principle which made them unnecessary. A new sanctity of life under the law of Love could dispense with minute regulations meant to guard men from injury in an earlier time of primitive passions. Many ritual regulations were of undoubted use to impress on an uncultured people the truths of God's purity and holiness. But when the larger understanding of the Divine holiness and of human purity came in, these rules were no longer needed. They passed away, superseded in the letter, fulfilled in the spirit.

The apparently unmeasured words of Jesus were animated by His quick sense that the scribes and Pharisees who posed as the Divinely appointed guardians of the Law were themselves making it void, undermining its authority by their exaggerated legalism. They had allowed external minutiæ to override the essential principles of ethics which constituted the inner spirit of the Law. And against all this mischievous action He declared His own jealous care for the Law as God gave it. He discerned its value as a whole in the history of the Jewish race. Not for one moment does He place the lesser enactments of Mosaism on a level with the Divine truth which the Law enshrined. But He felt that even these minor requirements had their place in the development of right ideas, and that the least element of the Divine revelation which these contained had more reality and durability than the entire visible universe. In the same spirit He had said, " Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away."

Also Jesus felt it necessary to warn His disciples against any tendency to regard the ancient Law as out

of date, and to feel absolved from any obligation to keep it. In that way they would miss the opportunity of doing those good works which would commend their new Gosepl to their fellow-countrymen. The only true progress in any time or sphere is to acknowledge the truth found even in imperfect forms, and to own the obligation of it for our own conscience. We cannot enter into any larger truth in any other way. The necessity lies on the threshold of all reality. And thus obedience to everything that was true in the older order was the first qualification for entrance to the new spiritual order. To break the authority of one of these least commandments, and to teach the same lawless spirit to others, was to make themselves unfit for that Kingdom of the Spirit. According to its standards such a man must have a mean valuation assigned to him. He shall be called least, wherever reality is the first requirement. On the other hand, to observe these least commandments, and to encourage the same honourable spirit in others was the sure passport to greatness in the Divine Kingdom.

And so Jesus called His disciples to a truer obedience to the Divine Law than the Pharisees ever dreamed of. When He declared that Christian goodness must exceed the righteousness of these religious leaders He was not evincing any habitual or indiscriminate antagonism towards these classes. He was well acquainted with their characteristics, for He had been brought up in the Pharisaic circle to which His parents belonged. He knew that among them were many true-hearted Israelites without guile or hypocrisy. But He could not escape an intimate knowledge of the insincerities and evil practices which caused them at a later date to be pilloried in the Gemara portion of their own Talmud, which gives seven classes of Pharisees, each distinguished by some mean

characteristic, some despicable motive. Jesus understood that it was the dissemblers who looked like the Pharisee who brought the worst discredit on their class, but also He discerned the fatal tendency of an externalized religion to become ethically unsound. He saw the evil in many of the churchmen of the time, and He was deeply afraid of it. In this Sermon more than once He warns men against it. And here He summons His disciples to a higher plane of living from that of the Pharisee who could be content with a routine obedience to tradition which might leave the heart unclean and evil. Honest men of all kinds were to exceed not only the mock piety of Phariseeism, but its most sincere righteousness. The inward disposition of humility and meekness were to be fundamental in their service of God, mercifulness and peacefulness in their social attitude. He would have men cease from peering into ancient books, regarded as final revelations, and instead to look life and men in the face in the broad light of the present day, to discover there a living God at work ever making known a larger obligation and a mightier motive to enable men to meet it. He would have them to forsake all mere rules, and to embrace His living principles. These would open up to them a more daring vision of human possibility, would shatter all dull complacency, and send them forth on the never-ceasing quest. Let Pharisees and His disciples alike discern the inner spirit of the old Law and read its Divine intention, and then in love to God and man fulfil that Law in the fresh inspiration of a new heart and spirit.

CHAPTER XVI

THE NEW THOUGHT OF MURDER

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the fire of Gehenna. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."—MATT. v. 21–26.

IN all that Jesus said concerning the Hebrew Law, He claimed that He was maintaining that Law as God gave it. If the people had understood their own Torah they would have welcomed His teaching, which placed it in its rightful and honourable place in the Divine order, in the gradual manifestation of the supreme moral Law. This was much larger and finer than had been possible to impart to a primitive people like the Hebrews. They were children in mind and in knowledge, who must be led on step by step. The majesty and the obligation of that holier Law beyond all that earth had ever witnessed was already beating in His breast, and in consequence He knew the imperfections of the Jewish Law even at its best. The note of authority struck repeatedly in these illustrations was not due to any august personal

claim made by Jesus, apart from any moral content, but was the utterance of one who has seen something far nobler and more effectual than the Jewish lawmakers had ever dreamed of. The old Law was the best God could bestow in that early time, because it was the utmost the best men could receive. But the new Religion was the truth which the Father could and did give to His well-beloved Son. And so He came with a glad, impassioned announcement of His wonderful new perception: "It has been said to them of olden time, this and that, but I say unto you." Jesus did more than clear away the accumulated rubbish which had become identified with the Law. He corrected the ancient legislation, showed its limitations, filled up its deficiencies. Even the Ten Commandments He took down to deeper ground of moral obligation. He turned men from the outward letter to the inward spirit, from mechanical obedience given to a compassable code, to the more searching requirements of infinite principles. The motive, the hidden spring of action, was of more consequence than any outward conduct, which without that inward desire had no security. Nothing could be plainer, or more direct upon the secret conscience, than our Lord's applications of these principles to the old Law of Murder, Adultery, Divorce, Oaths, Revenge, and Race Exclusiveness.

The Hebrew law of murder was based upon the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," a broad statement of a primitive obligation, over against a temper and practice which held life cheap. Later, a distinction was made between a deliberate murderer, the penalty for whom was death, and "him that killeth any one unawares." Cities of refuge were appointed for the latter, but not for the former.[1] But Jesus went beyond

[1] Num. xxxv. 6–16; Deut. xix. 4–13.

this prohibition, by searching for the evil root out of which murders spring, the contemptuous, angry spirit. The cherishing and encouraging of an uncontrolled temper makes a man a murderer at heart. Anger and hate are in themselves criminal in the Holy sight, even if they result in no overt violence. Fear of consequences may restrain the hand, want of opportunities may prevent the deed of blood, but the heart given up to passion means murder. One may be in no peril of becoming guilty according to the old commandment, but may not so easily be cleared remembering the new.

The word used for anger (ὁ ὀργιζόμενος) means blind, unrestrained anger, akin to the drunken transports of the ancient ὀργία, and the addition of εἰκῇ, without cause, or recklessly, is thought to be unnecessary, and is not found in many authorities. The revisers retain it in the margin. But with cause or without cause, anger of that violent character is essentially murderous. It is also made plain that anger of that kind is aggravated by contempt and execration, and the judgment on it more severe. Much labour has been spent to show that here Jesus uses the gradation in Jewish law courts to express a growing condemnation on the angry murderous spirit. The words "Raca" and "Moreh" have been forced in their meaning to express deeper degrees of anger, whereas Raca is a much stronger term of execration than Moreh, the true meaning of which is given by our old version as "fool," or simpleton. The best solution appears to be that given by Bacon,[1] who transfers from Jesus the responsibility of these unconvincing gradings of guilt by reading the passage thus: "Ye have heard that it was said to the ancients, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be amenable to the judgment. But I say unto you that any one

[1] Prof. B. W. Bacon of Yale.

who is angry with his brother shall be amenable to the judgment. And again it was said, Any man who shall call his brother Scoundrel shall be in danger of the Council of the Sanhedrim. But I say unto you that any man who shall call his brother Simpleton (or Fool) shall be in danger of the fire of Gehenna." This avoids the difficulty of supposing that Jesus made these discriminations in the degrees of guilt and judgment, where the guilt of using these contemptuous terms will vary with the user. To call a man a scoundrel as a term of execration was to be punishable by the Sanhedrim who sat in judgment on blasphemy. Yes, said our Lord, but a much lesser expression of that contempt which is blasphemy against man, the child of God, can bring a man to that condition of life which can only be compared to those loathsome fires of the burning valley of Hinnom.

If this solution be declined, then it must be understood that Jesus uses these gradations, not to distinguish degrees of guilt in hatred, but to give the strongest emphasis that all hatred is sinful towards God, and destructive to the inner life which yields to it, and is swayed by it. To His mind the one feeling which is not to take possession of the heart of man is contempt for any member of the human family. Anger, aggravated by contempt and expressed in execration, is a terrible evil in a man's nature, and Jesus includes all forms of hatred and wrath, despising and cursing in one deep condemnation.

The old commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," sets in the heart of man some true sense of the sanctity of human life, and that thought, through the ages since, has taken an increasingly higher place. The heinous crime of shedding human blood has not diminished when a time of warfare has deadened the conscience of it. Still, this august prohibition, reinforced by all that is

best in our human instinct, condemns all wanton disregard of living souls by mad ambition and desperate policy. The haunting voice demanding, " Where is your brother ? " does not cease with the cannon's roar and the smoke and fury of battle. It speaks to all time to save from fratricidal strife, and from those ways of remorse and fear that follow a crime so inhuman. Yet it is plainly taught by Jesus that other offences against our fellow-men are no less culpable. There are more ways even of taking life than those of the assassin, or the high-handed Cains of this world. A poisoned word can kill quite as effectually as a poisoned bowl, a cruel tongue no less surely than a dagger. Whispered words of slander, uncontrolled temper, have dealt fatal blows on that deep life where no sword can reach. And whatever be the issue, the venomous heart, the inflamed spirit, the contempt which curses our kind, rank as essentially murderous before the Divine face.

But at this point a somewhat abrupt extension, which is often overlooked, is given to duty. So evil is anger in the heart that our first duty is not only to remove all traces of it from our own spirit, but to eradicate from ourselves all that produces it in others. This striking enlargement presents a much finer and profounder morality, making us responsible in large measure for wrath in our associates. Speaking of the happy relations between William Blake and one Thomas Butts, an excellent and discerning patron of his art, Mr. Chesterton says : " Blake regarded him with serene affection, which was never ruffled by the flying storms that were too frequent in his friendships. No allusion can be found in his poetry to the effect that Thomas Butts was a Spectre from Satan's Loins. . . . If to have kept one's own temper with Blake was a large achievement (and it was no small one), it was certainly a truly noble

achievement to have kept Blake's temper for him." Both in men and nations, to preserve the peace not only in what we think about others, but also in what they think and feel towards ourselves, is an impressive triumph of human graciousness. And Jesus plainly urges that if any thoughtlessness, any bitterness, any contempt we have expressed, any injury we have done, wittingly or unwittingly, gives cause for anger, then we are to spare no pains, and to suffer no delay, in restoring good relations of brotherhood and peace. Nothing is to hinder this peaceful action, no most urgent duty, no most sacred worship. " If therefore you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has a grievance against you, leave there your gift before the altar and go your way : first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." Unless a man will earnestly strive to put himself right with his fellow-men, all his noblest professions are a weariness to God, and even his gifts and his worship an abomination. All human action, all national policy, framed on that principle of discerning brotherhood, is most acceptable and most dear to the Father of mankind.

Our Lord expresses a similar thought in another way, laying great stress on the human peril of the unpeaceable spirit. We are to allow no time for these occasions of strife to come to a head, not even the time spent in the church. Two men are pictured going to a law court about some quarrel, and encountering each other on the way. The injurer is advised to take that golden opportunity to get rid of the quarrel, lest he be condemned to grievous penalties. " Agree with your adversary quickly whiles you are in the way with him ; lest at any time the adversary delivers you to the judge, and the judge delivers you to the officer and you are cast into prison." The parable gives solemn warning of the

danger in which any man or nation stands unless they get rid of a quarrelsome spirit. The evil spirit works much evil to others, but its worst disaster is wrought in those that cherish it. The penalties are desolating, and persistence in the evil only makes them more merciless. Let men take heed. They are in danger of being imprisoned in their own anger and malice. Habitual indulgence in evil wrath is a dark dungeon to all that is best in human nature. And the word of Jesus only expresses what is the natural and inevitable retribution which anger itself works within all who yield themselves to it. In the dismal depths of the *Inferno*, Dante says to Capaneus, that embodiment of rebellious pride and evil wrath who continues in those fearful shades the spirit which had cursed his earthly life, "Ah, Capaneus, nothing can punish you like your own anger." That prison into which an implacable spirit casts a human soul is a terrible reality, and he who is so incarcerated "shall by no means come out thence until he has paid the uttermost farthing."

CHAPTER XVII

THE NEW PURITY

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman in order to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart. And if thy right eye cause thee to offend, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into Gehenna. And if thy right hand cause thee to offend, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into Gehenna."—MATT. v. 27–30.

On more than one occasion Jesus stigmatized His own generation as adulterous. He did not mean to brand them especially with violations of purity and honour, but spoke in the prophetic sense of spiritual unfaithfulness to their covenant with God. But the term might not untruly have been used literally. Our Lord's strong words in the Sermon and elsewhere suggest that the whole national sentiment and practice was deeply at fault. The persistent effort of the prophets had only partially succeeded in establishing monogamy, and in our Lord's time exceptions were common, against which the Law did no more than seek to limit the number of the wives a man might have. Also the Law was radically unjust in its enactments. Sexual unfaithfulness was forbidden to all married persons, but not with equal rigour. The adulterous wife was classed with shedders of blood, and was subject to the death penalty—a law which continued in force until A.D. 30. The penalty

was not always exacted, and tendencies appear towards more merciful treatment of the erring wife, as we see in Hosea's leniency to his adulterous wife (if the whole narrative is not meant to be symbolic), and in the ascription of Joseph's forbearance to the supposed infidelity of his betrothed, to his being a just man (Matt. i. 19). On the other hand, fidelity in a husband was in no way enforced. He could not even be divorced whatever his misconduct, and although the wife's lot was in some ways ameliorated, she did not gain the right of divorce before a thousand years had passed. Solitary exceptions, as when Herod's daughter Salome sent a Bill of Divorce to her husband, were stamped by Josephus as foreign indecencies.

From this unrestricted freedom of the husband to illicit amours in general was a small step. In that low conscience of the nation, men might keep themselves free from what was known as adultery, priding themselves on their conspicuous virtue, and yet be essentially guilty before God. So Jesus insists upon a principle for all time which should test the value of human virtue. The ninth commandment forbids infidelity to married persons. But Jesus declares a deeper obligation, which applies to the personal and social habits of the whole community. The old prohibition was ineffectual because it was narrow and shallow. It must be widened and taken down to deeper ground in the spirit. The sin of adultery, like that of murder, was in the heart. Genuine purity must be free from all unlawful sensual desire and coveting. "I say unto you that whoever looketh on a woman in order to lust after her (*πρὸς τὸ ἐπι θυμῆσαι αὐτῆς*) hath already committed adultery with her in his heart." This stringency against inward desires was not unknown before Jesus. The tenth commandment perhaps suggests the same standard of

judgment when it says, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife." The Book of Proverbs and the Book of Ecclesiasticus (chapter ix.) give much attention to these social perils, and give most wholesome warning against all dalliance with impure impulses. But none of them go so far as to say that encouraged desire is essential adultery. To Jesus the pure life is that which brings all the natural appetites, including those which are deepest in the nature and most essential to it, into control of the rational and moral elements of life. He who knew what was in man, because He shared the same nature, appealed that the higher should never be brought into subjection to the lower impulses. Desire is natural to man as man, but so are conscience and religion. Men have to see their whole life together, to unify it and save it, by free subjection to every noble consideration of the peace of man and the glory of God.

Jesus does not need to inquire whether the man who does not go beyond the guilty desire is in any way better than the man who does go beyond. The Law and the public conscience can only judge overt acts, and their jurisdiction soon reaches its limits, but the inward judgment searches the deep places of spirit and motive. Jesus was concerned with the conscious guilt of the sinner and his place among Divine realities. He was thinking of the beauty and peace of inward purity. But He has also to contemplate the ugliness and torment of inward impurity. The good of purity was so great, and the peril of impurity was so disastrous, that to gain the one and to avoid the other, no sacrifice could be too great. He quickens the imagination to those fierce, foul fires lighted in a soul by evil passion. That spiritual destruction and corruption he calls Gehenna, likening it to that desolate and loathsome valley outside Jerusalem, where the bodies of executed criminals and the

city's filth were cast to the ever-burning fires. Rather than plunge the whole being into that Gehenna of guilt and haunting memories, let men accept mutilation of part of their nature. " If your right eye or right hand—anything dear to you, good to you, as these—are a snare to you, pluck them out, cut them off, cast them from you. It is profitable for you that one of your members should perish rather than your whole body be cast into Gehenna." So strenuous is the warning of the Lord of all good Life against a life permeated and dominated by sensual desire. The deep matter is that men shall learn to judge truly of virtue and vice. Complacency on the level of the old Law may exist along with blindness to the new Religion. Virtue must frequently be re-valued, guilt newly assessed. Outward virtue must be guarded and animated by inward purity, or it has neither security nor value. Nothing can so undermine the value of a life as " secret faults."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MARRIAGE OF TRUE SOULS

"And it was said, Whosoever putteth away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, that whosoever putteth away his wife, except for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever marrieth her when she hath been put away, to be an adulterer."—MATT. v. 31, 32.

INTO the light of this ideal purity, heightened by contrast with the foul fires of impurity, our Sermon brings the vexed question of divorce. The reference to it comes quite naturally at this point, and is very simply and fundamentally made. The whole tone of it clearly points to its being introduced by Jesus and not by some would-be completer of His thought. Careful examination of its brief expressions shows that Jesus was mainly concerned to prevent serious injustice being perpetrated to women or to men, first of all to women. This cannot be rightly seen without consideration of the laws and customs of the Jewish people earlier and later. One of the earliest examples of the disadvantage and hardship which women from time immemorial have suffered is seen in a narrative embedded in the Book of Numbers.[1] The whole substance of it indicates early Semitic origin. If a man was rightly or wrongly suspicious or jealous of his wife, and there was no evidence of her misconduct, he had the right to submit her to the Ordeal of Jealousy, a superstitious custom common to the Semites and other ancient nations. The Ordeal was drastic, and consisted

[1] Num. v. 11 ff.

in making the suspected woman drink of water from a holy spring, with which dust from the floor of the sanctuary had been mingled and into which the ink of curses written on a parchment had been washed. The superstitious fears aroused by this thrice-sacred water were enhanced by solemn adjurations of the priest. Guilt or innocence was established by the harmful or harmless effect of the water on the body of the accused. Such a process, by well-known mental action upon the body, might well produce striking physical consequences in those who knew themselves guilty. But it might only too easily work injury to the innocent, who might be of more sensitive temperament and less mental and physical hardihood than those rightly accused. The fact that the onus of proving innocence rests on the woman is all of a piece with ancient Jewish custom. In these more primitive times polygamy and concubinage were not regarded as adultery. The examples of Abraham and Jacob, of David and Solomon show the persistence of polygamy as a matter of course. The recognized customs, and all attempts to regulate them in Hebrew legislation, look back to the primitive Semitic idea of wives and concubines being part of the husband's property. The Israelite wife was considered as having no ground for complaint on account of her husband's infidelity. Only the man was wronged, either by the wife who broke the bonds of wedlock, or by another man who infringed his property right. The husband was only answerable to other husbands whose marital rights he invaded. This idea was supplemented by another, which may in part account for the one-sided insistence on the wife's infidelity. She alone could affect the purity of race in her family. The husband's immorality affected the purity of race in another family. Hence the two actions

which Hebrew legislation forbids by drastic laws are a wife's adultery, or a man's adultery with a married woman. Actions of the sexes outside of these are far less regarded and often ignored. The position of a woman under these conditions was that of a serf, a chattel. She was bought and sold or transferred without regard to her mind in the matter. Even the tenth commandment, which some consider contains some anticipation of the inwardness of Jesus in its prohibition of coveting, really classes the wife not only with the maid-servant and the man-servant, but with the ox and the ass, and with the rest of the household property.

The Old Testament is far from being without a strain of dissatisfaction with this unjust treatment. The story of Hagar, the concubine of Abraham, reveals the mischief and misery wrought in families by these irregular though permitted alliances. And in the Book of Malachi there is a clear outburst of sympathy with the wives so lightly sent away, and indignation against the perpetrators of the hardship. Malachi declares with fervour that God hates all putting away, seeing that He has made the wife of a man's youth his mate for life by solemn covenant. Let not men deal treacherously with their wives, for the altar of Jehovah had been so drenched with the tears of the wronged women of Israel that the gifts upon it were no longer acceptable in the Holy sight.

But earlier than this, the Book of Deuteronomy legislates on somewhat more humane lines, and puts a limit to the husband's arbitrary will in disposing of his wife. He was subject to a heavy money fine if he unjustly accused his wife of misconduct before marriage, and was denied all right of subsequent divorce. If he took advantage of an unbetrothed damsel, he was obliged to take her as his wife, and could not later divorce

her.[1] If he accused his wife falsely of prenuptial infidelity, and his suit failed, then the woman retained the price paid for her to her father or brother. These are partial ameliorations of injustice, although no equality was established between the sexes. The classic passage in Deuteronomy was chapter xxiv. 1–4, which our Lord quotes, but significantly only in part: "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some matter of unseemliness (or indecency) in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorce, and giveth it into her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to wife; her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the Lord: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord giveth thee for an inheritance." The virtue of this enactment was that it placed a limit on hasty passionate action, and by making a legal form necessary, brought the man under some measure of public obligation. And it drew a line against further complications by the remarriage of divorced persons through the caprice of the man, on the ground that such freedom undermined public morality. The historical importance of these provisions in Deuteronomy lies in the ambiguity of their language which led to a notorious division in Judaism on this question of Divorce. The School of Shammai emphasized the "matter of unseemliness," which they interpreted as unchastity. Actually it could not mean this, because

[1] Deut. xxiii. 13 ff.

the penalty for that was not divorce but death. But on the strength of their interpretation this School forbade all divorce except for adultery. The freer School of Hillel dwelt upon the lack of favour in the husband's eyes. Any ground of divorce was allowed to the husband, as, for example, if she lost her attraction for him because he had found some one better-looking, or if she burnt his food in cooking. There can be little doubt the original code looked in that direction, keeping the property advantage for the man and making the vital matter the favour or disfavour of the wife in his eyes. And legal practice followed this laxer school, and allowed separation of many reasons other than unfaithfulness.

Those persons or Churches who seek to establish, on the teaching of Christ, some eternal ground for divorce or the prohibition of it, must take into account all which the Gospels record of it. In Matt. xix. 1–9, the Pharisees bring to Jesus their perennial casuistry, asking, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" —that is to say, are the followers of Hillel right in their laxer reading of the old law? Jesus refused to be drawn into their controversy, but turned them to more vital human considerations. When they confront Him with what they call the command of Moses in Deuteronomy, He replied that the permission, not the command, was given because of the hardness of the people's hearts, which made them impervious to the higher obligation. And again He refers them to the original principle of all true marriage. "From the beginning it was not so." Comparing this with Mark x. 3–5, we find the question about the Deuteronomic rule ascribed to Jesus, and the people speak of being suffered to give a writing of divorce. But the whole passage shows that Jesus really speaks of accommodation to the lower order of moral attainment. And the general

tenor of this version is to protest against all divorce, as does the detached fragment in Luke xvi. 18. Here, in Mark, the counsel is given privately to the disciples who pursue the matter, and it expressly speaks of a woman putting away her husband, and so incurring equal responsibility for the social mischief caused.[1] But beyond all this, as in Matthew, so in Mark, Jesus takes the people behind the legislation of Deuteronomy, and all other legislation ancient and modern, to that original obligation in the very nature of mankind. The design of Creation itself was to bind men and women in a union which would be closer than any other human tie. "For from the beginning of Creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and the two shall become one flesh (Gen. ii. 24). So then they are no more two but one. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." This is something more than saying what the Church has joined. It refers to no ecclesiastical sanction, but reaches far behind all human institutions to the inalienable nature of man as God made it. And the solemn warning is against causing a breach in this essential union of souls by any human tradition or legislation, or any evil influence of human action or passion. "Jesus nowhere shows the absolute rationality and verity of His thought than here. Spirituality is the very core of that thought, but it never misleads Him so that He misses the material facts."[2] We may truly say that marriage to Jesus is a Divinely ordained, mystical union of kindred souls which has its manifold roots in the Divinely fashioned nature of men and women. In that

[1] Many regard this as a later addition in a work meant for Gentiles. No Jewish woman could put away her husband.

[2] Ezra Gould, *Int. Comm. on Mark.*

union of life, physical and spiritual, marriage fulfils its purpose for the noblest educative ends, and is meant to be indissoluble.

Returning to the Sermon, we find that Jesus does not quote more than a part of Deuteronomy. He omits all mention of the disputed lack of favour and the causes of it, and only regards the requirement that any divorce shall be deliberate and formal, and not a matter of passionate impulse. He knew the weakness of that law, its cruelty to women, its corrupting influence on the men whose supposed masculine rights it safeguarded. But in that necessary writing of divorce He saw an elementary design to protect women from long-continued hardship, at least making for justice and a nobler idea of marriage. And so, according to His principle of fulfilling and not destroying the law, He courageously took hold of this slight tendency to set it free from all ancient prejudice and custom which cumbered it and prevented its development. He ignored everything else in the old enactment, disregarded all the controversies of the rival Jewish schools, and brought into the light of day this simple humanity which had long stood as an ineffectual witness against oppression. Broadly He makes His protest against the injustice to women, and also to men, by these divorces on trival grounds. Divorce for unfaithfulness, which itself breaks the marriage bond, is not in question, but separations for any reason short of this are declared to bring mischief of the most deadly order into human relations. "I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife (for any of these causes in question) makes her to be an adulteress, and him who marries her to be an adulterer." It causes innocent men and women to be falsely accused of immoral conduct, or may even lead them into ways of vice. The main concern of Jesus in all He said con-

cerning these matters was first for the oppressed woman, and then, beyond this, to place securely in the human heart and conscience the noble ideal of marriage. He gave no legislation or any injunctions of that character. He nowhere says that adultery was or was not a valid ground for divorce. In such intimate affairs rules of an iron cast are much out of place, and are quite contrary to His spirit. He may possibly assume the current position with regard to it, but this was not His habit, and He plainly had no love for divorce on any grounds. One fact is plain, that He was passionately opposed to divorce by caprice or arbitrary will of the husband. He does not say that tangled coils of marriage in ill-mated persons shall remain legally unloosened. Human laws must have regard to practical difficulties which arise in the clash of temperaments, or in the mental and physical disabilities by which true marriage is frustrated. They must do justly to men and women alike, not pandering to personal fickleness or popular licence. But to His mind all such provisions for separation are no more than accommodation to a lower order of intelligence and moral discernment which cannot understand the higher obligation ; to that hardness of heart which classifies men with primitive barbarism. All such ill-advised unions lower the human level, and stand as obstacles to the holy, beneficent purpose in the framing the most beautiful and delicate of all gifts bestowed on mankind.

Above all human laws, and above all the tragic failures of men and women to enter into the blessing designed for man, Jesus sets forth the essential ideal of all true married life, and summons all to be faithful to the Divine intention in that sacred covenant ; to give all their effort and patience, their wisdom and self-sacrifice, to make their marriage what God meant it to

be—such a holy, happy bond that any breaking of it is unthinkable. With such a union in view, Jesus speaks to all the world: "Whom God hath joined together," in this true union of affection and purpose, "let not man put asunder." [1] Neither Church nor State can form that union if it be not made apart from them, nor can they annul the marriage of true souls. In the words of Dr. Charles: "The Church cannot by its blessing transform unions which are entered into lightly and irresponsibly, and make them marriages such as God would have them — unions which are due to some transitory attraction, or to passing passion, or to sheer vanity, or to greed of gain or power, or to caprice, or to the mood of the moment in which men and women, disappointed of the love they sought, are caught in the rebound and married before they are conscious of their criminal folly." [2] The State should have regard to the national purity on which the whole fabric of society rests, and put no obstacle in the path of those who labour to build up the spiritual idea of marriage. The Church should seek to bring itself into line with the spirit of its Master in His desire to alleviate human suffering. While the State endeavours to make humane adjustments of the law which are in accord with the second Christian commandment, the Church cannot be content with an inconstant tradition. At present the Church violates the letter of the New Testament by allowing judicial separation, which is a genuine putting away, and refusing to sanction a divorce with a right to remarry. It cannot be claimed that this encourages marital purity, for it is notorious that the uncleanest communities in Christendom have been those in which marriages are legally indissoluble. The Church is

[1] Matt. xix. 6.

[2] Charles, *The Teaching of the N.T. on Divorce.*

well advised to follow the example of Christ in His tender regard for human sufferers, while insisting upon the essential marriage as the aim of all. He lays down no rules for these practical difficulties of life. Some may even say He leaves them untouched, but that would be to ignore the principles by which He would guide all human action, in the power of that religion which provides spiritual conditions and moral resources which can enable men and women to overcome the difficulties and even the disillusions of married life. He strove continually that men might enthusiastically endorse the noble ideal by their constant effort, so that no thought of adultery or divorce should ever arise.

The public consciousness which declines to include an illegitimate family on friendly intimate terms in its family life, in spite of all specious pleas of humanity urged by such a one as Mr. Wells, is based upon human instinct and experience as well as on the Divine wisdom. And the higher Christian conscience against the sanctioning of illicit family relations is built on the same unassailable grounds. In *One of our Conquerors* George Meredith portrays no mean, sordid example of these irregular unions, but in his braver and more discerning way takes them at their best. But all the more surely he traces the spiritual tragedy which rests upon the unwedded pair, and which falls most cruelly of all on the one most dear to them, that exquisite girl creation, their child Nesta. Those who undermine by their action a sacred human consciousness cannot expect to have the protection and welcome of that outraged consciousness. Genuine hardships may in particular instances be involved, but the blame must lie on those who, with no sense of the fitness of things, violate the happiness and peace of family life at the bidding of selfish passion. The embarrassment and confusion of

social relations, the public suspicion and censure, the inward shame and secret condemnation which confront those who act counter to the solemn teaching of the Lord of Life, are part of that flaming sword that turns every way to keep the way of the tree of life.

Jesus lays down no laws regarding marriage, but He seeks that that union shall be for the noblest educative ends of life. In this Sermon He leaves the whole issue to those great principles of love which transcend all laws. The Golden Rule suffices to teach the Divine duties involved in marriage, and to bring them to men not as an imposition but as a personal discovery from a living experience. It would be contrary to the whole spirit of Jesus to consider marriage as on its trial as a human institution. The so-called failures of marriage are due to those who wreck their marriage from the outset by want of mind and heart to know the meaning of the bond, who enter into the covenant of love without any real affection, or have not the inward resource of a right sense of the sacred obligations of marriage. For these failures—intellectual, moral, spiritual failures —divorce is an easy remedy and therefore no remedy. Nothing can more deeply blaspheme God and man than to despise that sacred consciousness which has been built up by the generations under the guiding hand of the Eternal, and which He has implanted in the very nature of men and women.

Marriage is not a sure passport to happiness. God has given it to the race as a trust, but it is what married persons make it. The companionship of kindred souls in the bonds of mutual affection is a happiness which lasts through the years, and increases with the years. In the finest marriages times of trial come when it may be hard to maintain the ideal. But countless numbers of men and women have by patience, conscience, loving

self-forgetfulness, triumphed over every difficulty, and stood honourable and beautiful before God and before man. The world is full of joyful married lovers who keep up their love-making in all sorts of weather, in joys and in sorrows, to the end of the chapter. They find no place in the public Press, but their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. The fiction of the day often errs by throwing a false glamour around marriage, speaking much of its joys and romance, but nothing of its duties and responsibilities. Or it gives a most depressing view of the difficulties of the married state, and the end it pictures is that of squalid, vicious dishonour, if not tragedy. The rights of men and women to do as impulse directs are insisted upon *ad nauseam*. One seldom has a realistic picture of those who overcome the difficulties and find a nobler joy beyond them. Robert Louis Stevenson speaks of the great task of personal happiness. Married happiness is a far nobler task. Love is the prime essential, but it will not last and grow if it gets no encouragement, no cultivation. The idea that romance of true affection is only for before marriage is disastrous. The romance of two lives in union with each other must never be allowed to lose its wonder, its freshness, its delight. It must increase not only in spite of all trials but by reason of them. Married persons have to build up family happiness by affectionate thought, delicate as well as faithful service, by mutual and willing self-sacrifice. The best secret of all such happiness is a life lived together in loving trust towards God and in loyal confidence towards each other. Only so can the true safeguard be found of married happiness. For this intimate union brings a searching test to bear on all who enter its sacred portals. It reveals the strength or the weakness, the nobility or the meanness, of the man and the woman. Its possibilities, both

upwards and downwards, are incalculable. To the one pair it may be the savour of life unto life, to the other the savour of death unto death. Like the mystic Tree of Life in the midst of the Garden of Eden, so marriage can be

> "Flaming sword to evil heart
> And rebel will; but for his part
> Who restful stays God's love within,
> Sheltering wings of cherubin."

CHAPTER XIX

THE NEW TRUTHFULNESS

"Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is His footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."—MATT. v. 33–37; cf. xxiii. 16–22.

OUR Lord's purpose to bring out, and make effective, the inner meaning of the old Jewish Law is clearly seen in His teaching regarding the solemn use of the Divine Name to attest a word of promise or a vow of fidelity. The purpose of these many oaths taught to the primitive Hebrew, and the solemn ritual attached to them, was to train the people to value aright their own word. They were a nation of escaped slaves, and the effect of slavery and of despotic, arbitrary rule anywhere is notoriously to impair the sense of human honour and truth. The oath was meant to establish the binding obligation of the human promise, but our Lord saw that it was rather undermining the simple word of men, and so for the sake of the principle contained in the original oaths He declared uncompromisingly for their abolition. "Ye have heard that it was said to them of olden time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all."

These few brief words, and similar words in the

same Gospel, are priceless. Nowhere does Jesus directly deal with the obligation of human truthfulness. Modern thought would give to this virtue a more prominent place than to some expressly eulogized in the Beatitudes. Unwisely, because these virtues provide the inner spirit which makes truthfulness inevitable. But the modern emphasis on veracity is sound. The obligation not to forswear ourselves stands undiminished. The breaking of our vows made to God—as in our marriage vows, our pledges as communicants, or as parents in the baptismal covenant—is the most shameful mishandling of the Holy Name. Jesus enhances the duty of fidelity to our word by extending it to the simple word unconfirmed by any oath. This was essential, for the people had come to think there were two kinds of the given word—the sworn and the unsworn, the one solemnly binding, the other free of solemnity or obligation. And the next step was to distinguish between two kinds of oaths. When God's name was invoked it was most perilous to break the word, but without that invocation nothing was binding. So they had got into the way of swearing by heaven or by the earth, by Jerusalem or by their own head, without meaning to be in the least careful or scrupulous in their assertions. It is said that you may measure an Arab's intention to cheat you by the fluency of his imprecations on his head, his beard, his soul. The Hebrews went on to make other ridiculous distinctions in their oaths.[1] They would swear by the Temple or the altar and think nothing of it, but not by the gold of the Temple or the gift on the altar. Other nations choose certain objects as specially unlucky if the oath sworn on them should be violated: in China a porcelain plate, in Christian circles of older times the bones of a saint, in Scotland a Bible or a broken sixpence.

[1] Matt. xxiii. 16–22.

Burns and Highland Mary plighted their troth to each other holding a Bible between them and exchanging Bibles with each other. The Bible given to Mary bears this Old Testament prohibition in Robbie's handwriting. In many of these cases there is a religious element which is degenerating into rank superstition. The simple word of promise is not to be trusted. It is disregarded if no oath be taken, and the next step is to be false to it in spite of the oath. Hence our Lord's sweeping declaration, "I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven nor by the earth." It has been well said that "Rabbinical authorities endeavoured to empty the oath of reference to God and so to narrow the scope of the commandment against perjury. Christ sought to make explicit the reference to God virtually contained in every asseveration, so as to widen the scope of His prohibition of swearing." [1] He leaves nothing to swear by. All things that heaven and earth hold are sacred because of Him who made them and sustains them and reveals Himself by them. Heaven is His throne, earth His footstool, Jerusalem His holy city, and a man's head the handiwork of Him who alone can make one hair white or black. Where can a man turn to find something to swear by which is not sacred with the Divine presence and power? To swear by anything in heaven or on the earth is to swear by Him who is Lord of all.

Our Lord's prohibition has not in mind what we call profane swearing. Yet the profanity which intelligent and reverent people reprobate mostly lies in the fact that the oaths in use do refer to the most sacred facts of our religion, or to the most solemn issues of human life. The Holy Name is taken into vulgar and irreverent use, and the most tragic realities of Divine retribution are rashly invoked, and all which is needed to make

[1] Wauchope Stewart, article in *D.C.G.*

them blasphemous is an infusion of bad temper, which is seldom far away. The evil is not so much in the words used. They are mostly good honest English, and they have their place to express solemn facts. The evil is in the pernicious use of them, which degrades the mind, debases the coinage of our speech given for noble human intercourse, and coarsens the fibre of the spirit. If solemn oaths in support of our word of honour are forbidden, much more are these senseless, depraving imprecations.

It is often maintained that Jesus did not condemn legal oaths ; that He acknowledged them, because when the High Priest adjured Him by the Living God to say if He were God's Son, He answered, " I am." This rather shows that He did not discourage solemn affirmations. He Himself took no oath. In the law court an oath in the name of God may lead some persons to tell the truth who would otherwise lie. On the other hand, no most solemn adjuration will make a real liar respect his word. Hardened criminals will lie most brazenly, and take cover under the plea that they did not really kiss the Book. Notoriously also witnesses commit much perjury in spite of the oath, and honest witnesses who swear that they will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, God helping them, might very well add a saving clause, " so far as the lawyers will let me."

We cannot make rules out of our Lord's principles, but so long as we keep up this swearing by Almighty God, it shows how far we are from the spirit of Jesus and the spirit of truth. If that spirit was understood, the need of these supposed safeguards, and our deluded idea of the value of them, would alike vanish into the limbo of exploded notions. The concern of the Master of Truth was that the simple word should be a man's

bond, sacred in itself. The oath was to Him obnoxious, because it lessens the value of that word. "Let what you say be Yes, Yes, No, No, for everything more than these cometh of evil." When a man protests too much, we at once suspect him of unveracity. He shows no confidence in the trust-inspiring value of his word. The "stronger" the language supposed to be necessary, the weaker the bond of mutual trust which is the base of human brotherhood. "Speak every man truth with his neighbour," says the apostle, "for we are members one of another." Lying breaks that bond which holds nations and men together. We have witnessed the unmeasured evils which come from a national violation of its solemn covenant. Until that ruined structure of international trust is restored, peaceful relations between the peoples of the earth are impossible. National falsehood spells international disruption. It sets the world in hostile camps under the domination of mutual suspicion. And the evil wrought on this gigantic scale is just the same falsehood, writ large, as in the smaller circles. It shatters the human bond of brotherhood.

This strong appeal for simple truth between man and man is prompted by a deep sense of the vital importance of human veracity. Let no man think that to establish his word he need to appeal to something more august and sacred. There is nothing more sacred. His word is the Divine breath in him. To be false to it is to belie Him who gave us power to speak. To honour it is to honour Him who made us and gave us the Spirit of Truth. We are affiliated not with the father of lies, but with the Father of HIM who, fearless of all consequences, and despising the Cross, spoke and was the Truth, and therefore the Way and the Life.

CHAPTER XX

THE CHRISTIAN RETALIATION

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."—MATT. v. 38–42.

"But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."—LUKE vi. 27–36.

MATTHEW here gives the negative precept, Resist not evil, in opposition to the Old Testament *lex talionis*, and follows this by illustrations which appear to many to add one difficulty to another. In reality these seeming paradoxes are far from being simply perplexing negatives, but disclose to an alert mind suggestions of glorious positive obligation and opportunity. This positive

counsel is made more emphatic by Luke, who omits both the Old Testament legislation and the negative call to non-resistance. His version summons men to something more fundamental and effective than mere resistance to evil, and in so doing supplies a key to the significant sayings which Matthew reports and Luke partly follows. It concludes the illustrations of the new kind of retaliation which Jesus desires with the Golden Rule, and goes on to commend an unselfish generosity and kindliness even towards enemies, and it bases the whole ethical ideal on the eternally active mercy of God. "*Be ye therefore merciful, even as your Father in heaven is merciful.*" In this it is at one with the version given by Matthew, while it proceeds to a glowing eulogy of the giving impulse and the blessed inward affluence which is its sure reward. The whole passage reveals true spiritual insight and artistry, and helps us to understand why Renan calls this Gospel the most beautiful book in the world.

These great sayings of Jesus have been largely made of no effect in the Church and in human life, and much blame for this unfortunate result must rest on the literalists. By insisting so rigorously on the letter, they have set men's natural instincts and perceptions by the ears, and prevented the glorious positive spirit of these sublime utterances from entering into the common mind and heart. From this blame the Friends cannot be exempted. The strength of this honoured body of Christians has been shown in great clarity of spiritual discernment as well as in much nobility of character. We gladly recognize their valiant services in the cause of universal peace, both in the past and the present, and their leadership during past years in the realm of scriptural investigation and interpretation. Our enthusiastic sense of the debt the world owes to this

Church in these respects makes it the more painful to realize how they have largely neutralized their splendid witness for the truth by their legalistic reading of these particular precepts. Their stubborn condemnation of all war, irrespective of its motive, and all warlike preparation even for protective purposes, has helped to invest the religion of Christ, in the minds of many, with an air of unreality. The insistence on the letter of this negative by a community of a truly lofty virtue has turned many from the perception of these glorious inspirations. Pedantic and unimaginative interpretation must go on to forbid all hostile action whatever against any kind of evil aggression, whether directed towards the individual, the community, the nation, or the peace of mankind ; whether the aggression be that of the world, the flesh, or the devil. Such an obligation imposed upon the race would make organized society impossible, and reduce men to moral pulp. Happily the best part of all such literalists is their wholesome inconsistency with their dogma in the practice of life.

Tolstoy was perhaps the most conspicuous offender against mankind in his ruthless demand for the literal validity of this injunction, although he can deal freely enough with the New Testament, not only by cutting out passages hard to interpret, but more fundamentally, by denying its whole redemptive spirit and process.[1] The crudities and dogmatism of his earlier work, *My Religion,* were probably due to his intense conflict with the militarist tyranny under which he and his fellow-countrymen so cruelly suffered. Russian politics are much in evidence. He says the non-resistance which he advocated was assailed from two opposite camps—the Conservative, because it interfered with the suppression of sedition ; the Revolutionary, because it hindered

[1] *The Kingdom of God*, pp. 78–79.

opposition to tyranny.[1] One might have thought that Tolstoy would have justified one or other of these parties in some resistance to evil. In fact, under the stress of criticism and the force of historical events, he did modify his opinions. In his later book, *The Kingdom of God*, he denies that his doctrine forbids all struggle against the wrong;[2] but in that case he abandons the literal reading of the text, which does not limit the prohibition to physical force. The literalist has not that liberty, but must go on to the *Reductio ad absurdum*.

Jesus certainly did practise non-resistance to evil. In life's extremity He submitted to men's evil wrath, because it pleased the Lord to bruise Him. But as certainly he made use of moral indignation in opposition to flagrant evil, even if the wielding of the whip in the court of the temple was no more than symbolical of His burning indignation. Few would deny the rightness of that action. And the idea that moral force is legitimate against evil, but that this moral force, when it proves inadequate, is never to be supplemented by any kind of physical force, cannot be maintained. Some read the words in Matthew—"They that take the sword shall perish with the sword"—as a standing condemnation of even defensive force against evil. But the words, it must be realized, only occur in this Gospel, and here they are properly applied to the aggressive action of His captors. They are thus in harmony with the whole passage, which rests on the ground that violence was unnecessary—legions of angels could be summoned at need—and also opposed to the purpose of God that His Son should suffer these things. Mark only records our Lord's remonstrance against the physical force used against Him. Luke recalls the disciples' question if they should strike, and Peter's action without waiting for the answer.

[1] *The Kingdom of God*, pp. 47–48. [2] *Ibid.* p. 47.

Jesus pleads for patience in His followers, and heals the injured ear of the foremost aggressor. John tells of the hasty blow struck by Peter, and our Lord's command to sheathe his sword and to recognize the will of God in the cup given Him to drink. Nowhere is defensive and protective use of physical force condemned, but offensive and tyrannical violence is declared to be opposed to the Divine will and to the whole moral order of the universe. Those who try to break the moral order shall be broken by it. The sword of the aggressor shall be turned inward.[1]

In its literal sense, this call to non-resistance may well be considered as local, interim-ethic, meant for immediate application to the zealots of a militant nationalism. These fire-eaters had little idea of anything but resistance, unyielding hatred and intrigue, against oppression. And Jesus, knowing their passionate temper and also the imperial power to which they were subject, calls them to a quiet spirit. Let them consider how their national subjection had arisen, and search out the Divine purpose in it all. We might even see here a rare incursion into the field of politics, a model for all Christian influence in that thorny realm, inasmuch as it seeks to remove human causes of evil—in this case the Jewish intractible temper. The counsel of wisdom and prudence for this small nation in the face of overwhelming oppression was never meant as a universal rule of conduct, for Jesus gave no rules either for men or nations. But the principle underlying it applies everywhere without limit. If the saying, "resist not evil," stood alone, it might even be regarded as pusillanimous, but it is only a part, and not the essential part, of our Lord's teaching here. Luke may have omitted it because he

[1] *Vide* Matt. xxvi. 50 ff.; Mark xiv. 43 ff.; Luke xxii. 47 ff. John xviii. 3 ff.

knew it had only local application, and the general sense of the appeal suffers nothing from the omission.

This whole utterance regarding retaliation is one and indivisible. For its interpretation, a clear mind, a good heart, sound common sense, and some poetic vision are essential. Dead literalism spoils all the delicacy, the bloom, and fragrance of the ideal Jesus presents ; it makes what He meant for wings to our imagination into fetters and grave-clothes. To prosaic eyes these words of holy passion will always seem mere rhapsodies, but to eyes made clear by intimacy with Jesus they will break, like Aaron's rod, into simultaneous bud, blossom, and fruit.

Our Lord was not content to leave men in undistinguished faithfulness to an external and calculable obligation, so He gives a gleaming ideal which was internal and incalculable, in that passion of universal love and benevolence which beat within His own breast. He would have men to adventure their whole being and destiny upon it, to put away all fears, all feeble calculations of things seen and handled, and to take flight on the wings of a great trust. To this end He took the risks of hyperbole to prevent His principles being added to the accumulated rules of a moribund Judaism. His injunctions cannot be literally followed without leading to manifest absurdity. Superficial and casual agreement with His teaching He never required. He desired rational thought and obedience, animated by vision of moral realities and issues.

The first fact to be noted is that Jesus completely repudiates the old retaliation, which was itself a limitation on a more primitive barbarism. The *lex talionis* belongs to the Hebrew Book of the Covenant, the oldest part of the ancient Law (Ex. xxi. 24). Far earlier it had currency among the more primitive Semitic peoples.

The Babylonian Code of Hammurabi contains it, along with other most drastic provisions of the same retaliatory character. Equal mutilation for mutilation inflicted, but also mutilation for the offending member : offending eyes of unlawful curiosity plucked out ; offending hands cut off, of a man for striking his father, a thief, a surgeon who, by supposed want of skill, lost a patient. The penalty was also increased or lessened according to the rank of the injured one. The Hebrew legislation was more plainly framed to prevent the unrestrained pursuit of revenge. Not more than an eye or a tooth was to be taken in reprisal. But Jesus excludes all revenge. He seeks to drive to the roots of the old inhuman temper, which was so deeply enfibred in Hebrew thought and habit, and in the general human heart. So He uses apparently unmeasured words which should never be misunderstood, for because of them the whole world may know that His religion leaves no room for retaliation. These lofty counsels were splendidly reproduced by Paul: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Men are overcome of evil when they try to cast it out by its own methods and spirit, thus giving it a stronghold in their life. Beelzebub is invoked to cast Beelzebub. Marauding Teutons are called in to deliver Britons from their northern foes, and the land becomes Teutonic. The attempt to overcome a military tyranny by adopting its barbarous spirit leads not to victory but to essential defeat. The only victory is that which is the outcome of positive goodness, and which at least tends to cast out the evil cause of human mischief. That desired exorcism can only be effected by understanding of the evil in its roots and growth. Every man who offers personal violence of any kind to another, or seeks to impose his will in any tyrannous fashion, presents a human problem. Some perversity of mind,

will, or circumstance may account for the violent action. Conceivably the perversity is in ourself, and we are in the wrong, in which case our duty is plain. Or the injurious person has some misconception of our thought, feeling, or action towards him, which our frankness might remove. Or he has a nature which needs no incentive of this kind. He is causelessly inflamed, following an inherent rascality. Then the need of our understanding is increased. By what evil fate or process did a living soul become so misgrown? and how may that twisted nature be best dealt with? In any case, resentment, mere resistance by unreasoning force, are of no avail. The fierce impulse to revenge will aggravate the trouble, but can no more deal righteously or effectually with it than thrashing a boy will cure him of the measles. The prime requisite is the spirit of sympathetic goodwill, to act as a solvent of the human hardness. Jesus our Lord, in the hour of earth's extremest violence done to Him, entered with Divinest sympathy into the long process of spiritual hardening which produced that blindness which was crucifying Him. He prayed for those who were despitefully using Him.

Sheer resistance to evil is no remedy for it. Christian duty has not begun when the enemy is paid back in his own coin. Reprisals may at times be necessary, just, and even merciful. But the crucial question is the motive for the reprisal. And the Lord of life's wisdom teaches that the only right reprisal is that which is actuated by benevolence. The new retaliation is good for evil. What personal action, what national policy is to be, is nowhere prescribed, but the spirit is prescribed by the Eternal Righteousness.

In the light of these principles, tested and approved by a wide human experience, the perplexity and barrenness which at first sight appear in the words which

follow, should disappear and give place to illumination and fruitfulness.

" Whosoever shall smite you on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

No words of our Lord have been so unintelligently treated as these. They stand as a challenge to discernment and common sense. The literal understanding of the words being impossible, sensible men are driven to find their spirit. The cheek is chosen to receive the hypothetical blow because violence there is a very intimate affair, and perhaps because the temper in which our Lord would have men meet all personal violence is most readily expressed there. Even a coarse blow on the face, a far more provoking and insulting piece of violence than a blow on the body, is to be met with a countenance not of hatred but of goodwill. That smiting on the cheek stands for all lesser acts of bodily injury, and all other kinds of personal offence. The principle is clear that no feeling of retaliation is to be harboured. As speedily as possible, desire for the good of the injurious person is to be expressed. What action may be the outcome of that desire is to be freely determined by a man's best judgment of the whole circumstances, under the guidance and direction of the noble motive spirit which in principle Jesus prescribes. The one essential requirement is to be faithful to the teaching and spirit of the Master who, when He was reviled, reviled not again. The good of the offender is to be sought, and his first and most pressing need for the sake of his own peace may be to learn manners and respect for other personalities. No rule could serve for the almost infinite possibilities of the situation. No action is forbidden to either men or

nations which is the outcome, not of bad temper, but of benevolent desire. In his article, "Jesus,"[1] Dr. Sanday says: "It could not be intended that officers of the law should turn the other cheek to the criminal"; but that is to give an unjustifiable interpretation of the words, and to fasten this on the individual. The broad spirit inculcated is good even for officers of the law, who would be no less effective ministers of justice if they expressed some goodwill for "criminals." Some close knowledge of policemen and prison warders in Edinburgh revealed much understanding sympathy for offenders beyond anything embodied in the law. The administration of the law is also not too rigid, but elastic, allowing much consideration of prisoners as human beings. And has the State or its officials any human right to proceed against wrong-doers on any other principle than that of benevolence? The most hopeful feature of present-day prison administration is that it seeks to go beyond the *lex talionis* and find a remedy for the mischief disclosed by the crime. Dr. Sanday could not provide a clearer illustration of the impossibility of separating the ethical ideal of the State from that of the Church or the individual.

The action of parents in resisting evil in their children is always right when it proceeds from parental love and an enlightened conscience; it is always wrong when it is prompted by fitful impulse or bad temper. And the policy of nations against aggression or the menace of tyranny may be judged on the very same principle. It is not impossible to seek the peace of the whole world, and even of the enemy, through war. The right spirit is not easily maintained when the brutal facts of life press cruelly, but it is the only right spirit, in peace and in war.

[1] Hastings' *D.B.*

" If a man will sue thee at the law and take away your coat, let him have your cloke also."

Luke has the idea of violence, and therefore puts the outer cloak first and the inner coat second. But both Luke and Matthew agree that the spirit of benevolence is to be so deeply in our human nature that neither unjust legal exaction or violent personal assault can destroy it. Rather than retaliate in kind and meet malice with malice, let a man freely surrender more than the aggressor would take from him. Interpret aright the intention of this hyperbolical statement and the mean will be discovered between retaliation and surrender to fraud or violence. Unless the knave, the impostor, the ruffian be frustrated in their evil designs, society would not hold together, nor the peace of nations. But the motive in the frustrating action must go beyond self-protection or even the defence of human right. The large-hearted will to remove the evil spirit which prompts the aggression is never to fail. The motive will give the quality to whatever action is taken against the evil we encounter. The first and the last word spoken in the spirit is to be a word of human friendliness. In a legal suit, a righteous man may defeat an unjust adversary, and in the doing of it and after the doing of it, he may seek persistently the welfare of the defeated one. He may act in every way possible to secure this welfare. He may bring to his adversary a new revelation of what is good and right in human relations, and so impart to him something of far more value than the coat he coveted, and may be at cost in the process beyond the price of the extra garment. He may bring to one who has known too little of it the warmth of friendliness, and give a comfort which no robe can bestow. He can fulfil the law of Christ.

" And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."

The words are spoken to those who were only too familiar with forced labour. The Romans marching through a province habitually impressed into their service men, with their animals, quite irrespective of their wish or convenience. It was a most vexatious form of tyranny and oppression, and the Jews would resent it unspeakably. Yet that situation is taken to illustrate the spirit of a right man. Jesus would have men seek, in every happening of life which resembles this forced labour, the opportunity thus afforded to express the human goodwill which the world needs. Tyranny and oppression are not to check the benevolent desire. Work done under compulsion may be so done that a finer glory rests upon it. Resentment against the imposition avails nothing, while the constant purpose to bring help and blessing to others goes to the root of all life's evil. The prosaic person says that to do more than we are tyrannously compelled to do would be to encourage the oppressor in his tyranny. We have not so learned human nature. The surprising spectacle of an impressed burden-bearer going cheerfully his compulsory mile, and then out of goodwill undertaking to double the journey, would open up a new order of life to average human nature. The genuine virtue of this willing service rendered, the nobility of mind which stands in utter contrast to the arbitrary action of the oppressor, would start a new idea of moral possibility. In the light of it the most hardened enforcer of forced toil might see the iniquity of brutal disregard of his fellow-men. Such action, not done to impress, but done spontaneously from the impulse of genuine goodness, would give a new vision of manliness ; and, multi-

plied in the habitual action of a Christian community, would become a positive redeeming force.

The principle suggested in this apparently enigmatic saying has the widest scope. No virtue lies in any service or morality which is performed because of external compulsion—the compulsion of lot, social custom or tradition, a sense of public decency or requirement. Virtue begins in the unforced service, the overtime labour, the extra mile. The genuine Christianity is expressed in the abundant aspiration after the noble ideal which arises from the inward longing of the heart. "Christian morality must be ardent and active, exceeding duty and outstripping requirement." [1] Vital religion is made by the spirit which desires as well as obeys. The "nicely calculated less or more" surrenders to the stress of free inward impulse. Christian goodness is not content with "keeping on the windy side of the law." It spreads all the sails of its nature and goes forth on the breezes of an eager aspiration into the vast ocean of human excellence. The positive enthusiasm of virtue and service enables a man to find the freedom of existence and to taste the real quality of religion. The bounds of every kind of compulsion, of custom, routine, calculation, and conventionality, are transcended, and Duty is transfigured.

> "Stern Lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
> The Godhead's most benignant grace;
> Nor know I anything so fair
> As is the smile upon thy face:
> Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,
> And fragrance in thy footing treads;
> Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
> And the most ancient heavens, through thee,
> are fresh and strong." [2]

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[1] Seeley, *Ecce Homo*.

[2] Wordsworth, "Ode to Duty."

" Give to every man that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."

Luke makes the injunction even wider : " Give to every man that asketh of thee . . . do good and lend, hoping for nothing again." Be generous, he would say, with no ulterior motive. Let the giving and the lending be free from all calculation of an after receiving. Here, again, the mechanical interpretation is impossible. Indiscriminate " charity " is everywhere demoralizing. It saps independence and does harm instead of good. And the desired benevolence is plainly to " do good " and not mischief. This point need not be laboured, for average human nature is quick enough to make these reservations. And we may believe the apparently unmeasured nature of these words of Jesus is intended to make such an appeal for the giving impulse as shall override all these reservations so far as they are suggested by selfish interest. Men shall not turn away from their fellow-men in a spirit of greed. It is not wise or right to give to every man that which he asks. What he begs may be the last thing he ought to have. But also, and far more deeply, no man is to refuse to give within his power because of a grudging spirit. As Burns says : " A man may tak' a nei'bour's part, yet hae nae cash to spare him." He can give his counsel, impart his own cheerful courage, take trouble to help one who is in trouble. The touch of sympathy, a currency in which the poorest can be rich, raises the value of our counsel or our gift to the *n*th degree. The heart to bestow is never to be abrogated, for it constitutes the chief virtue of all private and public beneficence. Systematize almsgiving, organize help to poverty, as is right. Yet so far as the contact of heart with heart is lost in the process, so far is " charity " made ineffective. In-

vestigate the causes of national poverty, as our specialists do most fully, but be sure there is no solvent for the evils except contact with the human heart of benevolence. So frequently the search into the past record of those seeking help is shallow. It finds something which can be classified, such as "the drink," and then ceases. It does not go on to the real causes underlying the record. Too swiftly it satisfies the desire to take no more trouble. Our Lord appeals for the heart that loves to give, to help, without any too minute scrutiny, "remembering ourselves, lest we also be tempted."

Luke adds to Matthew's version, as a summing up of the whole passage, the great appeal for the will to impart life's blessing as widely as possible. "Give, and it shall be given you; good measure, pressed down, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." Life in general will deal back to a man his own generosity, not always in the same coin as the giving, not always in gifts tangible and visible, but without fail in those gifts which reinforce the life within. In that inward life of a man, the receiving of blessing is conditioned by his willingness to bestow. A heart shut against giving is a heart shut for all purposes, and amongst these, for welcoming and apprehending the Divine bounty. An open heart towards our fellows is an open heart for all purposes, a heart that can understand and receive the ever-flowing riches of life. An open, generous spirit that can never give enough of itself to ease the sorrows of men will not be blind to the Divine bestowal of itself, and will bow in reverence before the glory of the unspeakable Gift.

The impulse to give includes the entire spirit that our Lord requires to remove men from retaliation. Also it is the positive human quality which exalts men to become the children of the Highest. God is revealed

as the Holy One whose central impulse is to impart Himself unto all men. The Incarnation and the Cross are the supreme proofs of the self-revealing, self-sacrificing heart of Deity. "The authentic sign and seal of Godhead" is that out of the fulness of an ever-waxing gladness springs the holy passion "to suffer for mankind and to recommence at sorrow." [1]

The Christian principle which runs through and underlies these adventurous precepts is that whatever happens to ourselves in the conflicts of human will, we are to meet all men, including those who are injurious or malicious, and those we call unworthy, with the free inward desire and even passion to impart the true blessing of life. To attempt to slavishly obey as prosaic rules such great utterances of a Divinely inspired Soul would be the greatest absurdity men could perpetrate. The whole constitution of life is against it. But the principle is eternal, and most practical. Conjoined with insight and sagacity, it would ennoble all things human. At the heart of all national policy it would ensure the lasting peace of all the world. And while labouring for this Divine consummation, any nation that will act according to this ideal of virtue will be crowned as the leader and inbringer of the Kingdom of God on earth.

[1] Browning, "Balaustion's Adventure."

CHAPTER XXI

THE NEW CHIVALRY

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."—MATT. v. 43–48.

So far the protest of Jesus has been against the *lex talionis*, with a profound appeal implied throughout for a benevolent spirit in human dealings. He now proceeds to make this appeal explicit, and to give it the widest possible scope. The Hebrews in a measure understood the command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" (Deut. vi. 4, 5), and had caught a glimpse of its corollary, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour" (Lev. xix. 18); but they had little or no idea of including any beyond "the children of their own people" under that term. The Old Testament has nowhere the words, "Thou shalt hate thine enemy." But they were expressly enjoined to keep up their grudges against other nations hostile to them, and "not to seek their peace nor their prosperity all the days of their life" (Deut. xxiii. 3–6). Their goodwill was to be confined to their own nation, with a slight extension to strangers

who lived with them and, it is presumed, shared their faith. In spite of sporadic expressions of a wider spirit, as in Ex. xxiii. 4, 5; 2 Kings vi. 21–23, the general temper was that so vividly represented and so effectually repudiated in the Book of Jonah. Jesus removed the barriers erected by a narrow and bitterly exclusive spirit, which had been almost the hall-mark of Judaism, and the sign of their declension from their high calling. He called for a broad, understanding tolerance and sympathy for all strangers and foreigners, and even for hostile people. And He adds the reasons in our religion for such a spirit of kindliness and chivalry.

To show active friendliness to those who are engaged against us in evil machinations, or against our kith and kin in murderous warfare, is difficult. Nor can we be expected to show the same kind of affection to these as to our familiar friends or allies. Other manifestations of our spirit are more directly to the point in the actual circumstances. But beneath all these legitimate and righteous reprobations, what is it right to cherish? Not revenge, not retaliation, but fundamental benevolence. "Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you." To many, the utmost they will attempt towards the ill-minded is to keep themselves free from all hostile action. They limit their forgiveness to abstinence from outward retaliation. They say they will forgive, but not forget. An example, clearly expressed, of this spirit may be found in the autobiography of Lord Herbert of Cherbury. In naïve fashion, he regards himself as a model of all chivalry. He was very proud that when he was personally injured he would not draw the sword, but contented himself with an inward feeling of resentment. "Except where his honour was

engaged," he never used revenge, but left his enemies to the punishment of God. Many reputed Christians would be quite proud to maintain that position. Yet our Lord asks not only for restraint of hostile action, or for trust in the Divine vengeance, but for a deep heart of benediction and prayer. Clearly, such ideal action by men or nations is opposed to many hoary traditions, many current maxims. Confessedly, it is the act of a great venture. But He who knows the heart of man would have His followers make the venture, and is convinced that such generous trust would be vindicated. He believed in the fundamental instinct in the human heart, and in the Divine purpose which animates all goodness and chivalry, and on these allied forces, human and Divine, he bade men place reliance. Men would be better if we thought better of them. Any spirit which would resent human kindliness is a perversion. We may have to reckon with it; the Divine Love encounters it; but the only solvent for it is more kindliness. Whatever the result of the generosity may be, the action is right. In spirit and intention it is according to the will of God, and if it brings no blessing to others, it will return to its source with refreshment.

The reward which our Lord holds out to this large-hearted spirit and action does not depend upon the response it meets among men, and therefore never fails. "Ye shall be the children of your Father which is in heaven," shall prove yourselves akin to His infinitely bountiful heart. The reality of religion is to be demonstrated by ascent to a region of virtue far beyond all that is customary and ordinary. Without that, men are no better, our Lord says, than the much-despised tax-gatherers, the moral outcasts of the time, or than the pagans, who have no true knowledge of God. Love to

those who love us, regard and courtesy for our own kindred, are not enough for His disciples. The question confronts them, "What do ye more than others?" The requirement is for a higher standard of virtue, a finer quality of goodness, an unusual degree and a wider reach of human sympathy, a passion for the honour of God. Not as others who are ignorant of the Divine greatness, but as spiritual children of the unseen Father of Goodness, whose self-revelation has been so majestic in the compassion and sacrifice of the Well-Beloved. "Spirits are not finely touched but to fine issue." And those on whom the touch of the Holy Spirit has been laid are by this touch consecrated to the highest aspiration, even towards that perfection of nature which is in God.

It is commonly thought that the Sermon on the Mount, while it is confessed to be the model of all ethics, has no theology. Some declare that this is its chief value. In fact, it has the finest theology conceivable, based on immovable foundations. And it is here reached through the thought of goodness and human kindliness, always the most direct way to a true theology. Jesus presents to men the Father of their spirit as the Ideal of all benevolence, all wisdom and righteousness, all creative and redemptive purpose. This is the noblest and most verifiable conception of the Deity any man can cherish. It will never fail in the most extreme mental conflict. The mode of the Divine existence, the inner relations of the Godhead, which we strive to conceive, are not such as could be fully disclosed in a life accomplished within the compass of humanity. But the reality of the Holy existence, and of the fulness of life and moral beauty in Him, is guaranteed to us by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the human experience of the redemptive value of the conception. This transcen-

dent moral Ideal, originating in a creative Personality, includes the main substance of the revelation in the Incarnation. In stooping to become incarnate, the Divine fulness entered into a self-imposed limitation. But our Lord's fulfilment of the moral ideal, His unbroken spiritual union with the unseen Deity, were the true effulgence of the Father's glory, the express image of His person, the condition under which His mighty works were wrought, and by which He became the perfect channel of the Infinite power and blessing.

And from this theology of God in the Incarnation the theology of man directly arises. The dignity of the human is measured by the greatness Jesus achieved in it. The spiritual unity with God is one which can be realized in ever-increasing fulness by living men and women. Man is made in the image of that spiritual reality. His nature is to confide in it, to build his life upon it, and ceaselessly aspire after it. And in it the essential kinship between the Divine and the human is located, and upon it the sure hope of a deathless destiny can be established. William Blake, that strange seer of things invisible, has expressed this truth with startling insight :

"To Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
All pray in their distress,
And to these virtues of delight,
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is God our Father dear ;
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is man, His child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart,
Pity, a human face ;
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, a human dress.

Thus every man in every clime
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine,
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

And all must love the human form,
In Heathen, Turk, or Jew;
Where Mercy, Peace, and Pity dwell,
There God is dwelling too."

PART IV

EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL RELIGION

MATT. vi. 1–18.

CHAPTER XXII. SHOW AND REALITY.

„ XXIII. THE RIGHT METHOD OF PRAYER.

CHAPTER XXII

SHOW AND REALITY

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. . . . Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."—MATT. vi. 1–6, 16–18.

HAVING given His strong yet genial summons to the complete righteousness of the inner life, Jesus adds a powerful warning against any attempt to externalize religion, especially in actions done for show. His call was in everything for reality, and for an unconscious virtue absorbed in its own enthusiasm. Insincerity and ostentation were anathema to Him. The whole section is omitted by Luke, probably because the evils aimed at were not so flagrant among those for whom

his Gospel was intended. Judaism had unfortunately specialized in the external and mechanical observances of religion, and the evil spirit was concentrated in the religious teachers, in whom Jesus recognized the enemies of true religion, because by their pretence and parade of piety they were depraving religion and deceiving the people. He called these churchmen of His time by an ugly name, hypocrites, which signifies something which is going on beneath the outward appearance, some evil motive concealed under a show of goodness. Even allowing that there may be some anti-pharisaic prejudice in Matthew which is quite absent in Luke, and remembering that among the Pharisees were many sincerely devout followers of true piety, it cannot be denied that the leaders were deeply tainted with insincerity, sometimes, no doubt, unconscious, but in others deliberate. They put on a mask to represent themselves as something they were not. They were "got up" to appear like the part they were playing. Jesus "observed these teachers, and found that they were mountebanks. Their gestures, their costume, were theatrical; their whole life was an acted play." [1] By that word "hypocrite," or actor, Jesus charges these religious leaders with wilfully producing a false impression of piety, and He who was distinguished by gentleness with sinners, was sternness incarnate to their whole system and spirit. Some fail to understand that a character without that rigour against falsehood would be emasculated. "The enthusiasm of Humanity does indeed destroy a great deal of hatred, but it creates as much more. Selfish hatred is indeed charmed away, but a no less fiery passion takes its place. Dull serpentine malice dies, but a new unselfish anger begins to live." [2] An uninspired, inhumane heart, looking with

[1] Seeley, *Ecce Homo* [2] *Ibid.*

indifference on sophistry and superstition, and the evil they work among men, could never have that holy fire kindled within it.

The warning is first given generally against all ostentation in religion. "*Take heed that you do not your righteousness before men, in order to be seen of them.*" Such a spirit vitiates all human speech or action. It robs the inward life of reality and makes it impossible to receive that Divine reward which is only given to truth. "Ye have no reward of your Father in heaven." Then follows three examples of religious practice to which the warning applies: almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. In all these, Pharisaic punctiliousness led to religious pride and to self-advertisement. We need not insist on the trumpets in the synagogue and at street corners, for in all times there are abundant forms of brass-band religion. In all likelihood we may distinguish degrees of insincerity. Some were earnest enough in their piety, as men may be to-day whose main idea of religion is a pedantic observance of its ritual, but the constant temptation was to have an eye upon the spectators. Others deliberately put on the appearance of religion for the sake of reputation, while others, through this reputation, pursued selfish evil ends. The second and third of these are specially stigmatized as hypocrites. Jesus speaks of them in a strain of irony: "*Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*" Their ambition is miserably meagre, and soon satisfied. For any larger good they have neither desire nor capacity. "*They have no reward of My Father who is in heaven.*" Their actions have no reference to Him. They are meant for the crowd.

We are not to suppose that the Pharisees were altogether inhuman, or that Jesus had no friendly relations with them. Some of His most genial parables

were spoken for their benefit (Mark ii. 17), and the elder brother portion of the Prodigal Son was a most beautiful appeal to all that was best in their spirit. To spend ourselves too freely on condemnation of scribe and Pharisee might be to condemn ourselves, for although we are being emancipated from externalism in religion, the process is far from being accomplished. The growth of insincerity belongs naturally to the externalizing of religion. As an example, in Ex. xiii. 9, 16, the people are enjoined to indelibly impress certain parts of their celebration of the Passover as a sign upon their hand and as a frontlet between their eyes, where the idea is plainly metaphorical. In later times, perhaps beginning as early as Deut. vi. 8, xi. 18, this was made literal, and in course of time a whole armoury of customs arose around these phylacteries, which were said to be more holy than the High Priest's breastplate, which only bore the name of God once, while they had it inscribed twenty-three times. So many things that could be done, and so many things that could be worn, without any necessary reference to their original meaning, that gradually all meaning was lost. And so when the Pharisees made broad their phylacteries and the borders of their garments, the outward sign of an inner religion had become an ostentation of insincere piety.

Against all this superficiality in its most venial and its more vicious forms our Lord sets the eternal simplicity of a natural religious spirit, the sincere absorption in the benevolent impulse, the aspiration for communion with the unseen, the inward sorrow for sin. Regard for appearances or public applause, in all their blatant and more subtle forms, He entirely reprobates.

In the matter of almsgiving, He declares, in opposition of all show, that the left hand shall not know what

the right hand is doing, using a current Semitic proverb for secrecy, but giving it a deeper application, calling for self-unconsciousness in acts of religious duty. Almsgiving was rightly regarded by the Jews as an essential part of the practice of religion. In the Scriptures it is spoken of as a means of blessing to the bestower, and of deliverance from his own troubles ; as the right expression of inward piety in contrast with acts of formal fasting ; as a means of breaking the power of sin in a life and of lengthening its tranquillity.[1] The word used for alms is ἐλεημοσύνη, which means mercy, the wider term being employed for the particular expression of it. A similar identification has arisen, not without some mischievous confusion of thought, in the word "charity." The Divine breadth of the all-embracing Love is restricted to acts of material benevolence, from which the original spirit is often absent, and it becomes possible to speak of something being as "cold as charity." Ἐλεημοσύνη is used in the Greek version of the Old Testament (the LXX) and in the Apocrypha, both of the mercifulness of God and of the merciful deeds of men. Great virtues are attributed to it in the Books of Ecclesiasticus and Tobit, where it has come to mean specifically deeds of compassion for the poor. In Tobit it is classed with prayer and fasting as a most commendable virtue. In Ecclesiasticus it is a chief part of righteousness. "Bounty is as a garden of blessings, and almsgiving endureth for ever" (xl. 17). But erroneous ideas of merit attach to the practice, as commended in these books, and Sirach declares that almsgiving will make atonement for sin, as well as be the guarantee of material prosperity. Of these ideas, Jesus makes no correction, perhaps because they look in the right direction. He accepts almsgiving as one of the natural virtues of

[1] Dan. iv. 27.

humanity, and He gives it a high place in His parable of the Great Assize in Matt. xxv. He could never discourage the giving of alms, or condone any carelessness regarding the want of our neighbours. The Sermon itself, especially in Luke's version, expresses the warmest commendation of the giving impulse. But here the Master was more concerned to establish purity of motive, and urges men to forget or to repudiate all idea of human applause. The virtue of material generosity depends altogether on its spontaneity, its unconsciousness, the spirit that we have seen arise in times of special distress or of national emergency, when the gifts of the people, rich and poor, have that spontaneity which is so truly according to the mind of Jesus. This is the spirit to make permanent. The need of humanity should always stir the imagination, call out the sympathy, and absorb the interest. It would not then be rare for men to do generous deeds and to say nothing, seeking no reward in human praise. The praise of all such large-heartedness is with God who seeth in secret.

The same unconscious absorption required in deeds of kindness towards man, is more than ever fitting in the prayer which is directed towards God. Prayer again is one of the fundamental instincts of men, crude and primitive to begin with, but capable of rising into the most sublime communion with the Unseen. Forms and attitudes of prayer, used with a view of impressing the public, were especially offensive to Jesus. Consciousness of other eyes than those which see in secret, vitiated prayer at its source. The soul absorbed in reverence for the Holy Will would naturally shrink from human observation, retiring into itself, and making a secret chamber of inward reality. It would be quite unlike Jesus to specify any place where men may or may not pray. So long as the heart is true, time, place,

manner are to be determined by experience of what best helps sincere prayer. The Apostle Paul says, "I will that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands." And again: "Pray without ceasing." The prime necessity is that men shall find in their prayers not only the secret place of their own spirit, but the secret place of the Most High. That sanctuary of the spirit can be found amidst life's cares, duties most pressing, pleasures most thrilling. In a moment, so swift is the possibility, the door may be shut upon all life's distractions, and the heart concentrated upon the Lord, the Guide, the Helper. Special times of prayer, special places, are of greatest value. Common aspiration in the sanctuary has a life and power beyond the sum of the individuals. It is vital with the sense of a common humanity, a common need, a common salvation. But this public worship only fulfils its end when it enables men to maintain a heart of habitual prayer, the inclination and the capacity for secret aspiration before the face of God, the spirit which spontaneously refers every issue to the Lord of Life.

Based on the same natural instinct and need is all that Jesus says of the practice of fasting. Partial or entire abstinence from food, especially from luxurious diet, for a specified time has been a recognized custom of the more civilized nations through all historic time. It appears to have originated in the felt necessity of keeping the body in subjection, and was often carried to great excess by those who regarded the body as the temporary prison of the spirit. Depreciation of the body lies very near to its origin, and probably only later was it realized as a salutary custom productive of bodily health. In initiatory rites of religion it held a prominent place. With differences of degree, and emphasis on the varied features of the idea, it was

practised by the ancient Parsees and the neighbouring nations influenced by them, by the Chinese, Hindoos, Siamese, Egyptians, Buddhists of Java and Thibet, Greeks and Romans, as well as by the Hebrews. Among the Jews, part of the preparation for the Day of Atonement, which later became a constituent of its ritual, was fasting. As well as a day of atonement for sin, it was to be a rest, a time of abstinence, and of humbling the soul. In addition to the one public fast prescribed by the Law, other fasts were established. Zechariah speaks of four annual fasts, which in the better day that was coming were to be transformed into feasts (viii. 19). Occasional public fasts were ordained in times of national distress and calamity. Private fasts were also observed by individuals, and Pharisees apparently regarded it as a distinct merit to fast three times a week (Luke xviii. 12). The very strictest fasts were from one sunset to another, until the stars appeared. Washing and anointing were prohibited, and complete isolation from all human intercourse was enjoined. The Books of Judith, Tobit, and of Jesus the son of Sirach, show clearly that in the centuries immediately before the Christian era, fasting was still prescribed and practised. Later apocryphal books, 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra, which belong to the period after the fall of Jerusalem, are evidence that it was continued in Jewish circles. The apostles practised fasting. The abstinence during Lent, which sprang up later, was an extension of an original period of fourteen days to forty in imitation of our Lord's fast in the wilderness. This fast and the Friday abstinence were very general in early Catholic and mediæval times. In Scotland, the fast before Communion seasons was one of the few features of Romanist customs which obtained a foothold in the Presbyterian Church after the Reformation, and was due to the influence of Anglican puritanism.

John Knox, in his treatise on "Fasting," enjoined periodic days of abstinence, with considerable lessening of the ordinary diet for eight days, and strict restriction to bread and drink for part of two days, together with frequent attendance on diets of worship. Later the practice became associated with preparation for the solemn occasion of the Sacrament by means of a seriously observed three days of fasting.

In earliest times the tendency is traceable for this wholesome element in human life to become mechanical and perfunctory, to be made a meritorious act in itself, and even a substitute for inward reality. So we find the Hebrew prophets denouncing it because it held no relation to the life before God. The second Isaiah anticipates the satire of our Lord on the parody of true fasting.[1] Jesus has no word either of encouragement or discouragement for fasting. No regulations concerning it can claim any warrant from His word or spirit. He was concerned with reality, and condemns all show of feeling. He appears to recognize that it has a natural place in human experience, but He leaves everything to the felt needs of the heart as men discover them. Like the prophets before Him, Jesus fasted because in life's ordeal He was carried beyond thought of food. Moses on the Mount, absorbed in communion with God and anxiety for the people given to his charge, fasted at prolonged intervals during forty days and nights.[2] Samuel and his people at a time of national awakening, David in his deep repentance, Daniel at a time of vision, all fasted.[3] The inward need, the anxious thought, the hope of Divine revelation, prompted the abstinence. We may be sure that not seldom the in-

[1] Jer. xiv. 12; Zech. vii. 5; Isa. lviii. 1–8.
[2] Ex. xxxiv. 28.
[3] 1 Sam. vii. 6; 2 Sam. xii. 16; Dan. x. 1–3.

difference of Jesus to meal-times caused Mary to fuss and the self-complacent brothers to scoff. When He held close converse with a bewildered superstitious woman, and sought to penetrate beneath custom to the soul, He told the disciples, who wondered at His slowness to take the food they had travelled far to obtain, "I have meat to eat that you do not know about." And His answer to those who wanted to know why His followers disregarded their sacred rules about fasting is most suggestive and delightful.[1] Why should they express mourning when they were not mournful, when they were rather rejoicing in the Bridegroom's presence with them? It would be most unreal to put on signs of grief and anxiety when no such feelings were in their heart. But the day would come when the Bridegroom would be taken away from them, and then grief would fill their heart, anxieties rack their mind, their whole future, and the future of their cause would be so uncertain and so absorbing that they would naturally fast. And He goes on to say that His religion was essentially one of rejoicing, of spontaneity, of natural simplicity, and it was quite impossible to sew this new religion on to the old garment of Jewish customs and regulations, or to pour the new wine of this free spirit into the old wineskins of Jewish ideas. Men must find and fashion a new and congruous expression for the new life within them. New wine must be put into new wineskins.

The show of this inward absorption and grief without its actuality was nauseous to Jesus. Let men, He says, not appear unto others to fast. So far from putting on that farcical visage of distress, or getting themselves up to play the part of a penitent, let them wait until such manifestations demand expression from their reality

[1] Mark ii. 18–22; John iv. 31–33.

within. And even then, Jesus says, keep your most genuine grief of spirit to yourselves and to your God who seeth in secret, and so far as men are concerned, put on rather the signs of rejoicing. "Anoint your head and wash your face, that you appear not unto men to fast." Emerson asks: "Suppose I have a headache, why should I afflict the world with it?" And if we have no headache, why pose as if we had? The indignant Hamlet says to his guilty mother with her parade of grief:

> "'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
> Nor customary suits of solemn black,
> Nor windy suspirations of forced breath,
> No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
> Nor the dejected 'haviour of the visage,
> Together with all forms, all shows of grief,
> That can denote me truly: these indeed seem,
> For they are actions that a man might play:
> But I have that within that passeth show!
> These but the trappings and the suits of woe."

The charm and convincing quality of all expressions of emotions, all sympathy and goodness, all outgoings of charity, lie in their self-unconsciousness. The name of God is to be borne on a man's forehead, where it is plainly seen by others, but unseen by himself. And this inward reality, spontaneously expressing itself in words and deeds of goodness and compassion, never misses the reward of the Father. The inward spirit brings its own reward by making us akin to the Father. The unseen Soul of the universe is not to be approached with superficial show of virtue. He is in secret, and He seeth in secret. No pretence of piety can deceive Him who reads the truth or the untruth of every heart. No goodness will be undiscerned by Him or unrewarded. And, although the words ἐν τῷ φανερῷ (openly) are

doubtfully genuine in the text, they are true in fact, though not as an appeal to secret fidelity. The secret approval of the Divine judgment ever tends to be manifested openly, not in any great Assize alone, but in the life of the one approved. A nature being more and more assimilated to the Spirit of God cannot be hid, but reveals itself by the radiance of reality for all honest eyes to read.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE RIGHT METHOD OF PRAYER

"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."—MATT. vi. 7–15; cf. LUKE xi. 1–4.

OUR Lord would have all superstition removed from that great act of religion that we call prayer. The heathen were accustomed to pray with a great volume of words, with empty repetition of phrases, as a kind of charm, and more enlightened believers are not always free from traces of the same idea that much time spent in devotions, and much urging of our desires, are in themselves meritorious, and a mark of sanctity. Jesus would make men understand that prayer was effective, not according to its quantity, but according to its quality. And He expresses one thought which can save us from many vain ideas. It is not necessary to inform the Deity of anything, not even of our own needs. The Father knows what things you need before you ask Him. And upon this follows, most appropriately, the Lord's Prayer, that all-comprehensive, delicately

and humanly beautiful series of prayers, given not as a stereotyped form, but as a pattern of the right method of prayer. "After this manner therefore pray ye."

It is to be observed that on the threshold of this temple of human aspiration the first suggestion is of reverence. The first desire of Jesus is to place men in true relation to a living God who can be called, in all spiritual reality, our Father, not because He is like our earthly fathers, but because they, at their best, are something like Him, and because human language and experience give us no nearer thought of what He is than the affection, the wisdom, the all-pervading purpose of benediction, the vital creative tie, the mysterious affinity of life found in the noblest human fatherhoods and motherhoods. Men are to pray to One who is transcendently parental towards them, who knows their needs, cares for their sorrows, rejoices with their joys, and in whom there is an everlasting purpose of benediction, of self-impartation for all His children. And this Father, so intimately near, in whom we live and move and have our being, is to be thought of as "in heaven." But in this prayer heaven does not signify remoteness in an unapproachable majesty, but exaltation of Holy Love, to be approached with an uplifting of the human spirit. It expresses the eternal ideal towards which all earthly good is to strive, in which it finds its source. What is to be realized on the earth already exists in the Eternal Mind and in the perfection of Life which He is. No casual familiarity in prayer is here encouraged, but lofty thought answering to His mysterious greatness. It is most significant that the first aspiration men are taught to form in that Presence is, "Hallowed be Thy Name."

Also, at the very outset, men are called to One who is much more than a Father to the individual. The

whole horizon is expanded before us into a sublime universality. "Our Father." We are summoned to no merely personal prayer, or selfish desires. The good we seek is to be for all men. We are to join ourselves with the whole human family as we pray: "Our Father, give us our daily bread, forgive us our debts, lead us not into temptation, deliver us from evil." The conception of the universal Creator and Father is to dominate the whole activity of our spirit as we draw near to Him, is so to rule our mind and heart that we can sever ourselves from no living soul.

The omission of all specific thanksgiving in this prayer is also to be marked. All is expressed in the atmosphere of confident adoration. We are taught to begin with the invocation of the intimate yet infinitely exalted Name, and to conclude with a full outburst of praise, acknowledging the Holy majesty and power. This fuller close of the prayer, found in Matthew only, may well be the conclusion that naturally arose in the early Church from the manifest pervasion of the whole prayer by a living trust in the Divine purpose of the Kingdom, the Divine power which carries through that purpose, and the Divine glory, the revelation of which is its consummation. Particular thanksgiving would be superfluous, a vain repetition, in a prayer of which the very centre and circumference is an adoring reverence.

The sublimest characteristic of these prayers offered for human lips and hearts is in the teaching of what desires are to have the first and chief place in all our approaches to the Holy Presence. When realized, they are found to be deeply subversive of many notions that men cherish. So far from the main end of prayer being to make our personal wants, saying nothing of whims and moods, known to the All-knowing, the whole principle and structure of acceptable prayer is

to be a deep concern for the Name and Honour and Will of Him to whom we pray. This first, this last, this all through. Even if the closing doxology be omitted, the all-pervading spirit is, " Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." The sense of the intimate yet transcendent Deity, the Father of the human spirit, makes the petitions that follow inevitable. The sacred mystery of the ineffable Name, the thought of His rule to be universally established, His Holy Will which is the heart of all Divine Fatherhood, are all bound together as constituent parts of one undivided Life.

The thought of the Father, and the reverence which burns in the spirit quickened by that thought, inspires the earnest desire that His Name, and all the Divine nature expressed in that Name, shall be held in sacred veneration wherever man is found. The full desire includes the prayer that the Name shall be preserved from all profanation on careless or evil lips, but it far transcends this negative aspiration, reaching out towards a positive passion to make that Name known and reverenced by all human intelligences. Reverence and awe for that Name which is destitute of effort to behold the moral and spiritual content of it comes very near to a superstitious idolatry. The true hallowing of the Name is seen, where all truth of life is seen, in the whole career of Jesus, the deepest impulse of which was the passion to honour the Name of the Father by revealing it in all its moral splendour. The boy of twelve was found with urgent spirit set upon the Father's purposes. And the Holy Son, prepared now for the last sacrifice of obedience, gathered up the effort which had been the animation of His whole being, when He said : " I have glorified Thee on the earth. I have declared Thy Name, and will declare it." On that sure base of the Name

understood and reverenced, all the rest of the aspirations are built. The degree in which the Father is known and His Name hallowed determines the depth of reality we are able to express in the following petitions.

We are taught to pray for the coming of the Father's Kingdom, that rule of God on the earth which is promised to the poor in spirit and to the persecuted righteous, that new ideal order of truth and love in which all moral values are tested and known, into which no Pharisaic righteousness can even enter. The Bishop's Bible (1537) has: "Thy Kingdom come unto us." It rightly expresses the Divine movement of grace towards mankind. But Jesus rather emphasizes its coming in us, and as the object of desire on the human part. The true aspiration includes the realization of the Holy sovereignty in the intelligence, the moral earnestness, the conscience of those who pray, and among our fellows everywhere. The personal reception of the Kingdom, with all its blessings, and also its tasks and duties, by its very nature must take a wider scope to include the reorganizing of all human society and institutions, all races and peoples, under the Divine sway, the ruling of the whole world in the fear and love of God.

The kindred and almost interchangeable petition, "Thy Will be done in earth," manifestly has the same scope. "In earth" expresses something deeper than "on earth," a penetration to the unseen and inward life which is characteristic of the mind of Jesus. Part of the meaning of the prayer is that submission to the Holy purpose which was so heroically realized in our Lord's Gethsemane, the full acceptance of the Infinite wisdom, the complete trust in the eternal purpose of good, amid all the darkness of life, and contrary to all the shrinking of nature from the fiery ordeal. With Jesus this submission was not to be divided from the

perfect co-operation with the mystic Will. In us it is "the submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-complete." But the prayer means, for us as for the perfect Son, much more than submission. It embraces another and more glorious aspect in the cheerful, active acceptance of, and co-operation with, that strong, all-pervasive Purpose, which is the meaning of all the upward movement of the ages. It is meant for a personal adhesion to the beneficent Will of God. It can be as a standard lifted up against all that is slothful, and feebly acquiescent in face of life's hydra-headed evils.

To appreciate the grandeur of these kindred prayers, the heart must be afire with a sense and a vision of the nature of the Deity to whom we pray. That Kingdom which is righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Ghost is that on which the Father's Will is set, and He who gave this sublime aspiration to our keeping also gave His uttermost life that this right, good, beautiful Will shall be accomplished on and in this earth, actually brought to pass in the life of men and of Man. The abject futility of supposing that this Kingdom, as Christ conceived it, was a merely Jewish triumph, a spectacular appeal to the vulgar eye and mind, becomes flagrantly evident as we realize the close correlation of the coming of the Kingdom with the doing of the Divine Will in its perfectness. The Kingdom is the Will, and the Will is the Kingdom. And all the hopes expressed in that one reality depend on the unfolding of the inner glory of that hallowed Name, to which all noble theological thought and all worthy Christian teaching and preaching are directed.

The leading principle of this Lord's prayer is thus disclosed, that earnest desire for the honour and purpose of the Father among men is to be paramount in our

prayers and our life. True prayers are the expression of the life. Out of six petitions here given, three are concerned with the human longing for no personal good except as it comes, as it does come in overflowing measure, through the due honouring of the Holy Name. Much more than half the prayer is filled with thoughts which place the one who prays in that spirit from which he views all human affairs and needs from the Divine standpoint. Only three petitions represent the manifold need of men, and these are dominated by the rest of the prayer. The chief desire in praying for bread, for forgiveness, for deliverance, is to be the honour of the Father by the fulfilment of His desire. The whole atmosphere of the physical, mental, and spiritual existence is to be created by the initial aspirations for the glory of God. First and chief in all prayers is to be the self-forgetful absorption in the Name, the Kingdom, the Will of God.

"Give us this day our daily bread." As commonly understood in the myriad petitions of Christendom, this is a prayer, the only one in the Lord's Prayer, given to all men in their anxieties regarding their livelihood, the due supply of their daily need. Its simplicity and restraint are quite in accord with the general attitude of Jesus towards the material wants of life. He would subordinate the anxiety for these necessary things to higher considerations, but He was not so unpractical as to seek to annihilate the natural solicitude, especially where the needs of others are concerned. The prayer, in its adaptation to the common heart of man, would be unspeakably impoverished if, for any reason, this simple petition were removed. We feel that He who, in His risen life, inquired after the disciples' fortune in the fishing, would not leave any who stand in need or destitution, or in fear of such, without some prayer to

God for the means of life for themselves and those dependent upon them. We may take it for certain that Jesus taught men to pray for daily bread, including in that all that was necessary for their subsistence. Yet the peculiar wording of the petition has led to much conjecture and discussion as to what Jesus exactly meant by the prayer. The chief problem centres round the word ἐπιούσιον, which is, as Origen said in the third century, "never mentioned in any of the Greek philosophical works, nor used in the everyday language of the people, but seems to have been coined by the evangelists." The actual words stand in this order: "Our bread, the *epiousion*, give us to-day." Luke's version is the same, except that it concludes with "give us day by day." The difficulty arises from the fact that this otherwise unknown word may be derived in one of two ways. It may be derived from the participle of ἔπειμι, to be imminent, and understanding ἡμέρα; it means the day which is coming. This appears to be its meaning in the Gospel to the Hebrews which, according to Jerome, translates this Greek word ἐπιούσιον by an Aramaic word meaning "belonging to the morrow." In this case we should have to translate the petition, "Our bread for the morrow give us to-day, or day by day." That is substantially asking for bread one day at a time, and there is nothing natural in taking the morrow to mean the whole future, seen and unseen, as Athanasius does, reading it "the bread of the world to come," so forcibly reaching a spiritual meaning assigned by some of those who derive the word differently. Chase, in his valuable work on the Lord's Prayer, conjectures that the original form was, "Give us our bread of the day," and that ἐπιούσιον is an addition to the original, due to the daily use of the prayer among early Greek-speaking Christians. The addition was due to the difference of

time at which the Hebrews and Hellenists met for prayer, and so the petition is made appropriate for both morning and evening use. The σήμερον = daily, so replaced did not disappear, but remained as a confusing redundancy.

Origen was the first to suggest another derivation of the mysterious word, although he was acquainted with the one above mentioned. He bears witness that many regarded the bread of this prayer as that bread which is proper to the future age. But he prefers to take the word as a compound of ἐπι with οὐσία, substance, or existence. The ground was thus prepared for the super-substantial bread of Jerome,[1] the future bread, the heavenly bread, the Bread of Life, of other Church Fathers, and for the controversial use of the word in the Athanasian - Arian conflict. Wicklif has "over other substance," which is equivalent to the Vulgate and Roman Catholic versions, super-substantial. Augustine may be taken to represent the majority of early Fathers who adopt this interpretation. He says that "Daily" means "as long as the temporal life lasts, and that after this life, the succession of days being over, we shall be so filled with spiritual food eternally, that it will be no longer daily bread."[2] Elsewhere he gives an ascending scale of significance to the bread. It means "physically, actual food; intellectually, the word of Christ; spiritually, the Lord's Supper." This makes a distinction which is illegitimate between the spiritual reception of the Sacrament and the intellectual receiving of the word of Christ, whereas both are spiritual, and both also have an intellectual ground. None of these spiritual interpretations can be said to have any warrant in the text. The derivation on which they build may have a

[1] In his Latin Version on Matt. and in Com. on Ezek. xviii. 7. But the word was a great perplexity to Jerome.

[2] *De Serm. Dom.* ii. 8,

far more satisfying meaning given to it. In fact, the Greek which most closely resembles the *epiousion* is the well-known word *periousion*, which means superfluous and non-essential, and in contrast to this we may justifiably read *epiousion* as sufficient or essential. In this case it corresponds to the prayer in Prov. xxx. 8: "Give me neither poverty nor riches, but feed me with food convenient for me," *i.e.* with the bread of my allowance. Probably Jesus made use of the Biblical expression in Aramaic. The τὸ καθ' ἡμέραν of Luke is an abbreviated form of a phrase in the Septuagint, in the passage which describes the giving of the manna, and might quite naturally be used by Hellenists in translating the prayer, giving the natural sense of day by day, one day at a time, which is just what Jesus taught His disciples. No one knew better than He the meaning and value of dependence on God for the daily supply. In a critical period of trial, He deliberately refused to abandon the human ground of trust in God. And no one so well as He had sympathy with the disciples in their future need. Like Himself, they had given up their calling, and the prayer was most suitable for them, the request of humble trust for that which is necessary for subsistence day by day. The whole presupposition in teaching men thus to pray is that of absolute dependence upon the Divine creative power, an idea which is only too easily obscured by the constancy of this bounty. Carlyle reminded us that a miracle ceases to be regarded as a miracle when it becomes customary.

Implied and encouraged in this prayer for daily bread is a sympathetic concern for others, for the whole world of man, especially for those in distress or want. True prayer for these would surely lead to earnest thought and the exercise of our best powers to increase

human wealth and to secure the equitable distribution of it, so that there may be no complainings in our streets, no hopeless poverty beneath God's sun. "Give us this day our daily bread" is a most practical prayer, and the scope of it is broad as the Heavenly Love.

Although we can find no justification in the prayer for a spiritual monopoly of this petition, assured that it finds its true human place as the only reference to material needs in the prayer He taught us all, we cannot deny the wider suggestion of the bread we pray for. It will be surely pleasing to Him who declared that He was Himself the Bread of God, the Bread of Life; who gave His Body to be broken for the spiritual hunger of mankind, if we, as we rejoice in the constant supply of our daily needs, can look through all that is material and see it as the living symbol of that Bread which does not perish but abides for ever. An older generation was quick to see this inward and eternal significance. I recall a "grace" we used to sing at Sunday-school tea-parties:

> "We thank Thee, Lord, for this our food,
> But more because of Jesus' blood;
> Let manna to our souls be given,
> The Bread of Life sent down from heaven."

That sensitiveness to spiritual realities suggested by the familiar food we receive day by day would make all our meals to be sacramental and all our family life a Eucharist.

As the material necessities of life are concentrated in daily bread, so the spiritual needs are represented very simply by two desires—the one for forgiveness, the other for deliverance from evil. "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." In St. Luke the word "sins" is used as the equivalent of debts, for in the second

clause it stands : " for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." Chase considers that Matthew is to be regarded as nearest the original form. The variation of Luke, *ἁμαρτίας* for *ὀφειλήματα*, is due to variation in translation from the Aramaic which could legitimately be translated in either way. Debts are what we owe to God on account of our failure or unwillingness to render to Him all that is due, and of our misdeeds which have increased the wrong that stands against us. It is by far the most comprehensive term employed to denote those evils for which we require forgiveness. It includes the evil heart of unbelief, or of perversity, which refuses to acknowledge our obligations to the Creator of our being, which repudiates that which He requires of us to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly before His face. The term *ἁμαρτίας*, which means missing one's aim or mark, is comparatively colourless, and does not necessarily carry with it the idea of evil intention. It could not be thought of as including all sins and trespasses in the way that debts includes them. Human indebtedness to God may be regarded as infinite, only to be measured by the boundless Goodness against which we sin. The Divine Mercy is so vast that it creates never-ending obligation. But there is an element of unreality in this comparison of ourselves with the Infinite. Our practical confession has to be that we have not made that response to the Father which was within our power, and also that we have done despite to the Almighty Grace by many violations of its spirit. Our debts are heavy, and we can only pray to be forgiven.

Along with this prayer is to be conjoined the promise to forgo all resentment, all penalties or hostility towards those who offend against the human relation in which we stand to them—to forgive those who are indebted

to us.[1] Our forgiveness cannot be placed on a level with the Divine forgiveness of man. The Holy pardon is the act of One who discerns the inward spirit of those pardoned. We can only judge of this at a remote distance by the outward expression in act. But so far as we can forgive wrongs done to us, we are to stand prepared to extend this forgiveness at the first possible moment. An unforgiving spirit is always out of place in our life, most of all while we draw near to God entreating His mercy. The forgiveness of our own sins depends on our willingness to forgive others, because one who will not be merciful cannot receive the Divine mercy, cannot understand the meaning of forgiveness, can scarcely desire it rightly, is out of harmony with it. But any one who prays in the spirit of this prayer to the Father of Love, desiring His blessing to come to all men equally as to himself, will not stumble in saying, Forgive us our debts, as we do here and now forgive our debtors.

The practical difficulty of fully accepting and practising forgiveness is increased by uncertainty as to what is implied in that transaction. How far are those who injure us to be conscious of the wrong, to express penitence, to make reparation for the offence before we are required to forgive? The question presses with respect to both personal or national injury. It is not only the old Adam in men that makes them sympathize with the injured husband in Browning's poem "Before":

"Ah, forgive, you bid him? While God's champion lives,
Wrong shall be resisted: . . .
Evil stands not crowned on earth, while breath is in him."

[1] The exact meaning of the New Testament passages is important. Matt. vi. 12: "Forgive us, as we have already forgiven." Luke xi. 4: "Forgive us, for we ourselves forgive." Mark xi. 25: "Forgive others, so that your Father may forgive you." Mark xi. 26: "He will not forgive unless you forgive." Eph. iv. 32: "Forgive as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

But the outraged one confuses the forgiveness of the heart with outward expression of it towards the wronger. The free going out of the heart in forgiveness is impossible so long as no way is made for it by confession and restitution. But the heart is to cherish the forgiving spirit under all conditions. And the mind of the poet speaks in the other part of the poem, "After," which expresses the futility of this blood-letting as a means of righting a wrong. The thrust of the sword, in what will seem to many a most righteous vengeance, is seen in all its paltry uselessness as the outrager lies low in death :

> "What avails death to erase
> His offence, my disgrace ?
> I would we were boys as of old
> In the field, by the fold :
> His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn,
> Were so easily borne."

The spirit which could have withheld all hostility in act and in heart was a far nobler and stronger spirit than that which sought and took satisfaction in blood. The one was right, the other was wrong. The one man could go to the Father assured of forgiveness of his own iniquities, the other could not. Yet we are not to think of the Father's forgiveness as being limited by our ability to receive it. In the sacrifice of God's own Son the pardoning heart of the Eternal was demonstrated in the infinitude of its bounty. And it stands as the ever-powerful incentive to the spirit of forgiveness in ourselves. "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

The closing petition is "Lead us (or bring us) not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." The difficulty of interpretation here does not arise so much from un-

certainty as to the terms employed, as from the fact that Jesus appears to teach us to pray that we may not be tempted, whereas St. James speaks of these very temptations as a cause for rejoicing, because through them we learn patience and acquire completion of manhood; and our experience and observation instruct us that only by sharp trials can our nature be developed into strength and maturity. The various translations by which men seek to evade the difficulty bring no help, for the Divine purpose throughout life seems to be that we shall find the true way of our nature only through conflict with error and evil. Temptations are necessary to the making of man, for without them there can be no moral victory and no virtue:

> "Why comes temptation but for man to meet
> And master and make crouch beneath his foot,
> And so be pedestaled in triumph? Pray
> 'Lead us into no such temptations, Lord!'
> Yea, but, O Thou whose servants are the bold,
> Lead such temptations by the head and hair,
> Reluctant dragons, up to who dares fight,
> That so he may do battle and have praise!" [1]

The good Pope has a deep sense of the imminent and subtle temptation which might have overcome the generous young priest Caponsacchi in his chivalrous protection of the injured girl-wife Pompilia:

> "So, perchance,
> Might the surprise and fear release too much
> The perfect beauty of the body and soul
> Thou savedst in thy passion for God's sake,
> He who is pity."

But he has also a deeper sense of the valour which had taken all the risks, and which had let light into the world through that irregular breach of the boundary.

[1] Browning, *Ring and the Book*—"The Pope."

And that combined feeling of subtle temptation, and of generous valour in face of all such, gives the general atmosphere of this apparently timorous petition. Our Lord does not teach any prayer for a life without temptation, which would incline to the pusillanimous. He expresses for us a natural and wholesome shrinking against being brought into any such combination of trying circumstances, through the force of events or by our own folly or misdirection, where fierce and sudden temptation might assail us and cause our fall. Jesus Himself, as He emerges from an agony in which generous impulses and evil solicitations were concentrated upon Him, solemnly counsels His disciples, " Pray that ye enter not into temptation." The knowledge of the abyss through which He had passed, and of the frailty they had so signally manifested at an hour of unique opportunity, prompted that counsel, warning them of the depths of moral tragedy into which an unwatchful, unprayerful spirit might plunge them. This attitude towards the critical assaults of evil is the reverse side of the apparently more valiant bearing which recognizes the necessity of temptation as opportunity for victory. The feeling of the moral value of the ordeal might tend to carelessness of the issue unless with it there is a vivid sense of the vastness of the evil which lies in wait for the unwary. The fear of possible spiritual disaster prompts the prayer, " Lead us not into temptation," and the prayer is supplemented, and almost corrected, by the allied and urgent petition for complete deliverance from evil.

Not valour but foolhardiness goes out of the way to seek temptation, or fails to avoid it when it can honestly be avoided. Only at the call of duty or humanity are the reluctant dragons sought in their lair, from which they work ill among men, and forced to do battle for

their life. But the true temper of life is that, while we pray not to be brought into temptation, yet if these ordeals are necessary to rouse us from sloth or unconcern, and give us the right moral fibre of a man, then we will welcome them for the sake of the deliverance we seek from all evil. In these delicate emergencies of thought the poets are our best interpreters, and the resolute lines of Stevenson, who has in mind the evils of sullenness and unthankfulness, are good for every man. He prays the Celestial Surgeon :

> " Lord, Thy most pointed pleasure take,
> And stab my spirit broad awake ;
> Or, Lord, if too obdurate I,
> Choose Thou, before that spirit die,
> A piercing pain, a killing sin,
> And to my dead heart run them in."

Deliverance from evil is the first and last necessity of man and of a troubled distracted world. For this we are taught to pray unreservedly : From all personal sin, all allurement of an evil world, all spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places, good Lord, deliver us. It concerns the honour of God, as well as our spiritual manhood. The whole travail of the Godhead, as revealed in Jesus and on Calvary, has this as its aim and end. To set men everywhere free from ignorance and dulness, from unbelief and moral deadness, from sins of the flesh and from more subtle sins of the spirit, from all disregard and all violation of the Infinite Loving-kindness, is the prayer we are taught to pray. " Evil " is a wider term than " the Evil One, " and includes all possible perils from every agency. The aspiration reaches from the infirmities and transgressions of every day up to that ideal of an enfranchised universe which places us on the level where the Invocation culminates, " Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will

be done, as in heaven so on earth." And the inspiring method of the whole prayer is to encompass the entire moral endeavour with a living sense of an all-pervasive Spirit of holy and beneficent will. Nothing but the deadening effect of custom prevents us from discerning the magnificence of the method, and from embracing it with the consent and ardour of our entire nature. The modern mind, tired of negatives, should welcome with enthusiasm these unmeasured positives of life. The whole conception has evidential value. To imagine that it can be explained by anything in a nation like the Jews, steeped to the lips in a moribund legalism, timid of the least departure from convention, yet blind to the majesty of their own Law inwardly conceived, is to have lost all historical sense and most other sense along with it. Quicken the spirit that breathes in this prayer, and we bring into action the surest means of delivering the world from evil in its origin and issues. War and the ills which beget war would vanish with all their blasphemy against God and man. Strife and war will never be abolished by any prudent calculating consideration for material profit and ease. These are, indeed, the fruitful source of national suspicion and evil rivalries from which war springs. But let the people learn to praise God, to hallow the Father's Name, to seek His Kingdom as man's highest joy, to make His will supreme in thought and aspiration, then the earth will yield its increase in all human and Divine good, in unbroken brotherhood and peace. "After this manner therefore pray."

PART V

THE CHRISTIAN TREASURE

Matt. vi. 19–34.

Chapter XXIV. Passing and Permanent Possessions.
„ XXV. The Single Eye.
„ XXVI. God and Mammon.
„ XXVII. True and False Care.

CHAPTER XXIV

PASSING AND PERMANENT POSSESSIONS

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."—MATT. vi. 19–21; cf. LUKE xii. 16–21, 33–34, and LUKE xi. 34–36, xvi. 13.

JESUS often spoke of a man's treasure, that which makes him rich with the affluence of the inner life. Out of the good treasure of his heart the good man brings forth good things. The well-instructed Christian scribe will bring forth out of his treasures things new and old. The Christian truth and gospel are as treasure hid in a field, for which a man may well give all that he has, exercise the whole energy of his nature. Warning is also given against placing the chief value on some positive evil. An evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things.

In the Sermon the contrast is rather drawn between treasures that are essentially permanent and those which in their very nature are perishable, and men are urged not to set their affections upon the wrong object. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal." Jesus has no other-worldly contempt for things of this life. He does not

desire to despise any of them, for they can be good ministers of a grace beyond themselves. Nothing in the Christian religion forbids a man from gathering round his life objects of interest and value which appeal to the various sides of his manifold nature. He may rightly treasure his household possessions, books, pictures, works of art of all kinds, ancient and modern, things of historical or practical worth. The decisive question in all these interests is how and why he values them. If he sets store by them because they help to make life richer and fuller and add to the joy and inspiration of the race ; if he treasures them because they bring into our existence wide knowledge, true thoughts, living emotions, noble aspirations, then he is rightly using them to lay up permanent treasures. Unless they awaken these higher sentiments, if they are only valued because they minister to pride of possession and selfishness, they are of the earth earthy. They become hopelessly vulgarized and demeaned. They disappoint all who trust in them. They lie exposed to the moth and rust, and the chances and changes of existence will, like thieves, break through and steal. By seeking in these things nothing beyond them of permanent value, men allow them to usurp a place among vital treasures, and so rob them of all the enduring value they possess.

In contrast to this presumptuous pride in mere things, Jesus calls men to set their heart on those qualities in all objects of desire which, although they are found on the earth, truly operating in their place, have their origin not on the earth, but in spiritual realities. Minds are apt to be confused, if not stultified, in thinking of matters of the spirit by regarding them as something quite apart from material things and occupations. But earth and heaven are not entirely separate realms framed on mutually exclusive principles, but neighbour-

ing and kindred states between which there is much actual, and far more possible, intercourse. The spiritual and permanent realities, what we call the heavenly, carry on a peaceful penetration of the material and impermanent things of earth, imparting to the entire life of man, through these, its higher principles. As a higher civilization presses on a lower with new ideas and customs, transforming the mental fabric of the native tribes, so the Kingdom of heaven presses on the material, and through this on human life, with new conceptions and a finer spiritual culture. Through the passing shows of earth it imparts the enduring riches, treasures laid up in heaven. The living Power of all life reveals itself, for example, through the world of Nature. It can so quicken natural things that in them men feel the "overseeing Power to kindle and restrain." Wordsworth makes Nature herself say of her adopted child :

> "The floating clouds their state shall lend
> To her : for her the willow bend,
> Nor shall she fail to see,
> Even in the motion of the storm,
> Grace that shall mould the maiden's form
> By silent sympathy.
>
> The stars of midnight shall be dear
> To her, and she shall lean her ear
> In many a secret place
> Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
> And beauty born of murmuring sound
> Shall pass into her face."

But Nature in herself has no permanence and no power. Apart from the Divine, she dies and returns to her dust. It is the life eternal that presses upon and through Nature, which broods upon it from above, heaves beneath it, and dwells within it, which never did betray the heart that loved Nature, but nourishes and enriches it with

unfailing treasures. That spiritual presence which is not to be put by, which is transcendently immanent in the material, is more divinely active in the mind of man, making it aware of the secret charm of all living things and of the natural world, and more responsive and receptive to its blessing.

Thus all things existent on the earth can be the media of a spiritual element derived from the quickening spirit. Through them, and through myriad other agencies, realities come to be man's noblest possessions, carrying in them sure marks of their higher birth and enduring destiny. Wisdom, knowledge, understanding, truth, sympathy, love, all the generous qualities and holy forces which enrich the spirit, are not of the earth but are from above. They are of such a nature and permanence that they can be laid up in a right character ; they go to form the inward self, and to add wealth and lasting greatness to the essential being. They are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Many other things on the earth have no destiny, in themselves, beyond the life here. They can satisfy the senses, but have no permanence in their nature. They can minister to the spirit but cannot be themselves laid up as lasting treasure. Riches, fame, even love itself if it brings nothing to our inner life, are treasures laid up on the earth. Much of human love, even wedded love, has no eternal meaning. It cannot withstand the shock of life's disillusionment, still less the shock of doom. These earthly things fade away, and fail the deep need of the spirit, while the inward riches, begotten of human affection which is made our own by fellowship with the Father of spirits, abide as treasures laid up in that spiritual existence of which we become partakers, upon which nothing of earth can lay its corrupting

hand, of which no earthly changes can ever rob us. A living poet celebrates these lasting treasures as "the things that are more excellent":

"The grace of friendship—mind and heart
Linked with their fellow heart and mind;
The gains of science, gifts of art;
The sense of oneness with our kind;
The thirst to know and understand—
A large and liberal discontent:
These are the goods in life's rich hand,
The things that are more excellent." [1]

Whittier sings of the memory of one most dear as treasure in heaven:

"Dear Heart, remembering thee,
Am I not richer than of old?
Safe in thy immortality
What change can reach the wealth I hold?
What chance can mar the pearl and gold
My love hath left in trust for me?"

And what is true of all sacred human love is truer still of the holier Divine affection. Possessing this, making it continually more our own by personal faith, we have laid hold upon the eternal reality which is the abiding life, the enduring treasure. These inward riches do not need to be left behind when we pass hence. The love of man we have learnt from Him who revealed the Divine heart, the sensitive spirit to truth and goodness, the heart of sympathy, the deathless aspiration for more intimate communion with the Soul of our soul, these pass with us to the higher life. They have become part of ourselves, in that higher nature which is one with God.

Upon the fateful choice between the perishable and the permanent depends all that makes a man what

[1] William Watson.

most deeply he is, his inner life, his heart. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." The homage of the spirit, the worship of the heart, is to be rendered solely to the Unseen, the Spiritual. The value of everything else is to be measured by the contribution it makes to the permanent values. In his examination in Faith, Hope, and Love in the Stellar Heaven, Dante declares how he had been drawn from the sea of perverted love, affection set upon the wrong objects, and placed on the shore of the right love, and he adds :

> "So all the leaves which in the garden bloom
> Of the Eternal Gardener, now I love
> In measure of the Love they bear from Him." [1]

For any life to be misdirected from this aim, its affections entwined vitally with interests that belong to this world alone, is a most terrible perversion of the essential being. The very heart of the man perishes with the perishing of his earthly treasures. Deep affection, passionate desire fixed upon any object absorbs the nature of that object, be it lofty or mean, noble or ignoble. Men grow like that which they most value. Under cover of the *Old Buccaneer's Maxims for Men*, Meredith preaches that "We are possessed by the treasure we possess, we hang on it." [2] Material, earth-bound, perishable possessions made our chief concern, engaging and controlling the energies of our nature, bind our best life in with their fate. They harden, coarsen, and impoverish the spirit, until in the last issue they leave nothing in the life which is worth permanence. The nature that God made for splendid wealth of soul is given over, with its poor treasures, to the moth and the rust. On the other hand, inward possessions, human affections, and sympathies, directed towards God and

[1] *Purg.* xxvi. [2] *The Amazing Marriage.*

His purposes among men, quickened and enlarged affinities with all that is eternal—these esteemed as the highest good and unweariedly sought—confer their quality upon the nature that loves them. The inner being of the man ascends far above change and decay, becoming imperishable through its abiding union with Him who is the Unchangeable. The outward man may perish and decay, but the inward man is eternally renewed. That is the true achievement of immortality, and it does not appear how in any other way the human can attain unto the deathless life.

CHAPTER XXV

THE SINGLE EYE

"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"—MATT. vi. 22–23; cf. LUKE xi. 34–36.

LUKE gives the parallel to this passage in another part of his Gospel than the Sermon (xi. 34–36). The method of his grouping here is noticeable and characteristic. Quite apart from any internal correspondence, on the strength of a verbal connection in λύχνος, a portable lamp, he takes the logia which Matthew uses in v. 15, a warning against allowing anything to hinder the clear outshining of Christian character and influence, and tacks on to this the saying from the version of Matthew which speaks of something quite different, the effect of the condition of a man's spiritual eye on his discernment and whole activity.

In Matthew's version the vital connection of thought is unmistakable. The strong warning against setting human affection on wrong objects is continued and made more searching. The perishing of the life is illustrated by reference to one specific part of our capacities, that of moral and spiritual vision. An earthly preoccupation and passion (such as love of worldly possessions, which are always in the background of these counsels), dominating the life, brings a great darkness into the whole nature, while an undivided, unembarrassed absorption in truth

and goodness issues in a complete enlightenment for all noble discernment.

In our Lord's words, so pellucid in their simplicity that one may miss their profundity and the artistic perception of the Speaker, the main reference seems to be to the bodily eye. But the suggestion of the finer spiritual vision is implied all through, as is plain when the conclusion comes: "If therefore the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Jesus here, as elsewhere, speaks of what everybody knows but few realize: "The light of the body is the eye." In that organ, with its intricacies and delicacies, the miracle of vision is accomplished. The beating of the ether waves upon it is transformed into sight. The eye receives the light and disposes of it for the whole activity of the body. But the condition of the organ determines what use is made of the glorious illumination. "If therefore thine eye be single," ἁπλοῦς, uncomplicated by any kind of defect or disease, if it is rightly disposed within itself, and rightly related to the light and all the light reveals, then "the whole body shall be full of light." Jesus would have men realize the fine effect of an unperverted bodily organ. When that eye has each part sound and properly adjusted, its muscles, its iris, its lenses, its retina with its delicate filaments, then every activity of hand, arm, foot, head, is made possible and exhilarating, the whole range of the bodily powers is enlarged and enhanced. The whole body is full of light. Luke somewhat ineffectively enlarges on that pregnant saying, in verse 35.[1] But, as it stands, it is abundantly suggestive of the wonder and delight, the new worlds of beauty, natural and human, which are opened up to the spirit through the eye which is a true instrument for the light. And all

[1] Corruption of the text is suggested.

this to the artistic soul of Jesus was intensely symbolic of the deeper effect of spiritual light in the unspoilt soul. The artist receives more than his sensations of beauty. He sees more than harmony of form and colour, hears more than the music of sounds and words. All things come to him "apparelled in the glory and the freshness of a dream." Realities beyond the bodily senses, suggested in them, he strives to represent in music, poetry, painting, sculpture. And Jesus does not simply refer to the eye with its powers as an illustration of spiritual sight. His bodily vision of the broad fields of nature, or of the intimacies of its beauty, was not divided from his spiritual faculties. In the spirit, He saw the light of the sun penetrated by, encompassed about by, spiritual realities. And we may be sure that when He said, "Your whole body shall be full of light," He had deeply in mind the effect of unhindered Knowledge of God on the entire nature of a man. "First that which is natural, after that which is spiritual." In the right life the activities of the two go side by side, and are complementary to each other. But, while the spiritual can opearate without the physical and maintain its integrity, the physical is hopelessly stultified without the spiritual. The clear activity of the inward eye imparts a deeper sight to all our sensibilities. It opens up temples of worship to our delight and wonder. It enhances the appeal of the human face in parent, child, friend, and lover. It transcends all other seeing by giving soul to the vision.

In the splendour of that pure deep disclosure of reality, Jesus saw the catastrophe which results in the inward life from cherishing false aims and purposes, either as substitutes for true aims, or as an embarrassment to them. Nothing can be more terrible than that the inward faculty of a man which has the capacity of

seeing God is turned away to the vain attempt to combine the antagonistic interests of God and the world. The moral and spiritual sight is first hindered and then destroyed, nay, more, the seeing power itself is perverted to positive evil. The perversion of the best is always the worst. Essential values are turned upside down in our judgment. The inward sight is so affected that it sees good as evil and evil as good. There is no limit to the bewildering confusion. How great is that darkness! "Great indeed! because it not only hides realities, but produces all kinds of deceptive unrealities; to the blinding character of all darkness, adding the creative activity of light; suppressing the clear outline and benign face of things, and throwing up instead their twisted and malignant shadows." [1] That is the disaster which Jesus contemplates which is worse than blindness, an evil beyond that deprivation. The eye itself becomes evil—πονηρός, and the whole body "full of darkness." The contrast between the simple eye, looking on the world with honest, unsophisticated goodwill, and the evil, perverted eye, must not be overlooked. It is more than likely our Lord has in mind the positively malevolent eye of a life under evil domination. The Evil Eye has its well-known significance and reputation. In ancient times amulets were worn as protectors against its malign power, and in modern days many still think it safest to cross themselves when passing a funeral procession or a heretic clergyman. A familiar passage in Ecclesiasticus [2] gives the idea of niggardliness which is scarcely in point here, but it also refers to envy, which is far more relevant: Evil is he that envieth with his eye, turning away the face, and despising the souls of men. The evil eye is the perverted eye,

[1] Dr. James Martineau, *Endeavours after the Christian Life.*

[2] Ecclus. xiv. 8–10.

and nothing more readily than the jaundiced spirit of envy, which grudges men's happiness and rejoices over their misfortunes or downfall, can envelop the soul in darkness. The warning of the whole passage is against a spirit of selfishness which ever tends to become positively harmful towards all who, as it thinks, infringe upon its self-importance. Eyes full of envy are also likely to be filled with malice and all uncharitableness, and as the result, the whole life filled with darkness, and the inward sight itself turned to darkness.

But in the main, Jesus is contemplating the familiar helplessness and hopelessness of all our bodily members when the eyesight is perverted or destroyed. He gives this as a parable of the more calamitous confusion that results in the soul when its seeing power is given into the relentless hands of positive evil. The disabilities of the limbs deprived of the light may be mitigated by new powers acquired by other faculties, as the sense of touch, of hearing, of memory. But in the spirit overtaken by darkness there are no such alleviations. The poor maxims of this world can never act as substitutes for the vision of truth, life, and God in Jesus Christ. Even the quest for beauty, a true human resource, may only too easily become a disillusion and a mockery, unless it be inspired with spiritual insight. The natural and wholesome love of the sensuous and the quick perception of it may degenerate into sensualism. Tragic examples of this decadence have not been unknown in modern days. The cult of the beautiful has been discredited, and the discredit has been cast on some who are guiltless. The prophet of the cult was Walter Pater, who cannot be charged with the perversions of some who claimed to be of his school. In his *Marius the Epicurean* he has impressed the educative power that lies in the perception of the beautiful, and the need of

promoting the capacity of the eye, keeping it clear by a sort of exquisite personal alacrity and cleanliness, and above all, keeping the vision unconfused by any ignoble purpose. In this he at least approaches the conviction that without a noble passion which is at heart spiritual, even external beauty cannot be rightly discerned. All the evidence is that Pater never lost sight of that inward necessity. But, unhappily, his doctrine was seized upon by those of a different moral fibre who followed after sensation, ever new sensation, without that inward perception, without moral scruple; and out of that could only come what did come, moral dissolution.

Plato calls men to guard the eye of the soul. The light of the body, the whole being and value of a man, is the inward eye. If, therefore, that spiritual faculty, that soul, be kept single, simple, uncomplicated, in ambition and pursuit, looking on the world of possibility and duty with whole-hearted love for those realities which permanently enrich the life, maintaining itself unconfused by any invasion of perverted affection, then the assurance of Jesus will be made actual, the complete nature before God and man shall be full of light, and we ourselves children of light.

CHAPTER XXVI

GOD AND MAMMON

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."—MATT. vi. 24; cf. LUKE xvi. 9–13.

OUR Lord's intense seriousness concerning the tremendous issues of a man's choice in life may be again measured by the way He places in uncompromising contrast and antagonism God and Mammon. Mammon was the common word, in the language Jesus spoke, for riches. Here it seems to be almost personified as a rival deity to the true God. Some have held that there was a Syrian deity which bore that name, but probably the idea is drawn from Milton, who represents Mammon as a fallen archangel, "the least erected spirit that fell from heaven." No such thought can be traced in the intention of Jesus, although it represents truly enough the fact that riches, the good gift of God, have been so grossly degraded. Jesus nowhere despises worldly wealth, even while He manifestly fears its debasing tendency among men. He could appreciate the wholesome discipline for character in its acquisition, and the delight in its manifold and beneficent uses. But He directs men to that evil spirit that makes riches, and things akin to riches, the central object of worship and life. How foul and inhuman such a spirit can be is powerfully suggested by G. F. Watts in his painting of "Mammon." It represents, not riches, but what

riches can make of a human life when they are given free control of it. The entire symbolism expresses the idea of a gigantic and cruel evil. A coarse, unwieldy figure sits heavily on a magnificent throne. Its clothing shines with the lustre of gold, but its under-robe has the colour of blood. Its right hand and its feet are, almost unconsciously, crushing down upon the naked and helpless forms of a man and a woman, while the left hand grasps the money-bags. Two grinning skulls stand on the throne behind the shoulders of the figure ; and above all the splendour of the gold raiment, the face of a brute beast, heavy, sensual, remorseless, and stupid, appears, the head crowned with a circlet of gold, and wearing, like his compeer, Midas, the ears of an ass. The spirit of Mammon—riches erected into a tyrant of men's conscience—blindly lays ruthless hands on suffering men and women, in order to possess itself of what it can neither understand nor enjoy. Nothing can exaggerate the brutalities of the materialistic spirit. It attracts to itself human cupidity and gives the reins to unmeasured world-violence. War and Mammon are close allies. John Morley, in his *Life of Gladstone,* says war is welcome to Mammon worshippers, for it gave them opportunities of a rich harvest. Riches unmoralized, unspiritualized, can change the wholesome nature of honest, happy industry of hand and brain into a cause of human hostility. It perverts the natural fellowship of the race and its generous rivalry into a dehumanizing selfishness. In Wagner's music-drama, the *Nibelungen-Lied,* the Rheingold is the source of endless cupidity on the part of underground gnomes, primitive giants and men, and even of those deities in whom the author satirizes the ruling powers and conventions of his native land. That hoard could only be possessed by those who would forswear love. But

having made that renunciation, the possessors might forge the gold into that Ring which gave power over others, although along with that evil dominion there came an inevitable curse. One does not go to Wagner for any exalted ideas of heavenly treasures, but we may find a striking picture of the brutalizing effect of an unidealized national prosperity, and of the strife and violence brought about by the lust of possession, and the kindred Will to Power. A nation may gain much territory, much increase of wealth; it may be widely acclaimed for its gigantic success and world renown, and may in the process lose its ideals, frustrate its own capacity for human service, undermine its own religion. In forswearing love, the sanctifier and guardian of all national greatness, it may lose its own soul.

These are extreme examples of Mammon, and many may think they have no temptation to anything of the kind. But these staggering international manifestations of the evil spirit have their beginnings in lesser forms of the same breed to which we are all prone. Men may despise all forms of knowledge and art, and all the finer virtues of Christianity, humility, meekness, mercifulness, charity, because they are "not practical." They may measure all these by money standards, by business utility, and put spiritual excellence out of account. They may allow their real devotion to be absorbed by business pursuits until they rule the life. They may practically refuse the highest Truth and Goodness, which is God, and prefer material gain. Between these is the choice which men have to make. They cannot combine them both. In speaking of the need of spiritual vision, Jesus speaks first of the necessity of a healthy eye for the body. So here He begins with the well-known and obvious impossibility of double ownership of a man. It has been discovered in some of the dug-up

papyri that an ancient will might dispose of a slave in portions, between two or more legatees. If this was in force in the day of Jesus, then the strife which such dual ownership caused might well be notorious and would give point to the saying. Such a poor victim would have to take sides in the strife by attaching himself to the one owner and holding aloof from the other. One illuminating expression is, " He will hold to the one," will look for support and help from him rather than from the other. And the whole question here is to which of the competing powers of life, the material or the spiritual, a man really looks to for that security and peace which his busy, harassed existence needs. The present crisis in world affairs, and the fall in money values, has led some to think that this generation may yet have experience of actual want. Would such a catastrophe leave the fundamental trust of our life intact, or are we really depending on material possessions ? We are not to allow ourselves to be drawn away from spiritual values by the pursuit of anything else as the chief good and security of our life. The serving of two masters is everywhere distracting and confusing. The attempt destroys the service. It is more than ever impossible in the affairs of the spirit. The trouble is that so many try to serve both. We have to be concerned with both, but the right way is the way of Jesus, even while material things are sought earnestly, as they must be, to keep a mind and heart above them, to make them the servants of our own noblest interests. Those who are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ are not to become the slaves of business or pleasure, or to yield their nature to the hard, cruel hands of Mammon. Money affairs have their just place in the life, but they have no right to enter the temple of the soul. True manhood must have its place, in the understanding of truth, in sympathy

with the humblest sorrows of earth, and in a soul of aspiration towards the great and enduring things of life, those that are made in the image of God. Then the material affairs of earth will not use manhood but be used by it. Even the unrighteous Mammon itself will be so employed that spiritual ends are served, and friends are made which will never fail us, the inward friends of right character. These friends will "go with us to be our guide, in our most need to be by our side," and there is no home of honest reality, no abiding-place of lasting peace, no fulness of life in this world or the world beyond, to which we shall not find entrance by inward right. They shall receive us into everlasting habitations.

CHAPTER XXVII

TRUE AND FALSE CARE

" Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment ? Behold the fowls of the air : for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature ? And why take ye thought for raiment ? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin : and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith ? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat ? or, What shall we drink ? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed ? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek :) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow : for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."—MATT. vi. 25–34 ; cf. LUKE xii. 22–31.

AT first sight there may seem little connection between the stern contrast of God and Mammon and this serene teaching concerning the trustful, peaceful existence. Yet there is the closest connection, which by no means depends upon the uniting " therefore." And we can well understand the relief to the Speaker in turning from the dark, sinister side of life to which men gave themselves so disastrously, to that other, nobler side of human action with its finer issues. Instead of the fatal

choice of things exposed to the moth and the rust, instead of Mammon worship and its dreadful dislocation of all social human life, a life serene, untroubled, peacefully pursuing the noblest concerns of God and humanity, tending ever towards the unifying of mankind under the ægis of the Kingdom. This Divine disclosure of the secret of happiness was necessary to complete our Lord's thought. After all, the desire of gain begins in a perfectly right concern to get a living for ourselves and those dependent on us, and to establish some security for the future. The trouble arises from two sources. Life may become difficult, and the struggle to establish a foothold in life hard and precarious, when legitimate care becomes painful and distracting worry. Or life may become prosperous and affluent, when the danger is that gain, riches, shall be made an end in themselves, with no greater ends beyond. In both cases the quiet strength of life is dissipated or destroyed. Jesus in the words before us brings all the resources of His geniality and His own happy experience to bear upon the often desperate unrest of the heart caused by the struggle for existence. He passes from His condemnation of Mammon, and seeks to remove the underlying cause of the unrest, to undermine the secret care of the heart, and to displace it by the fundamental good of life. "Take no thought," Jesus says. When the Bible was translated, thought meant anxiety. "In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul" (Ps. xciv. 19). In Scotland the word is still used in the same sense; that which causes much care is a "sair thocht." The two opposing quests in life are still in mind, and the ill-effect of the false aim in the darkening of the soul, the confusion of all our existence, is contrasted with the wholesome effect of the true aim in a peaceful outlook on all life's experience, a

mind freed from that black care which rides on men's shoulders and wears them out, body and spirit. The method Jesus urges is that a higher care shall liberate us from the lower anxiety, a noble preoccupation shall cast out the fearful spirit. Life works that way. Men and women are fretful about personal griefs until some greater cause for trouble takes up the mind. Mrs. Gummidge in Dickens' *David Copperfield* was a poor, lone creature, burdensome to herself and others, until the tragedy that overtook her kinsfolk cast out the constant occupation with her past sorrows, and transformed her into a woman ready for any devotion. In time of war many a weak, fearful woman was made strong by the call for service and sacrifice. The trifling fancies and cherished comforts of many were put out of count in nursing the wounded, in working for their country. Many men passed through hardships which would in normal times have shaken their life with desperate anxiety, but they felt that in such a world-crisis, with its widespread sorrows, their own cares did not signify. In every time, real concern for some great good for humanity is a true panacea for many fears. And on that principle Jesus said, " Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness," and you will find freedom and peace. He directs men to lose their personal cares in unselfish service of God and man. The addition by Matthew of " and His righteousness " is superfluous to those who rightly understand the sphere and scope of the Kingdom, but it is often good to make explicit what is implicit, and here it also serves to remove the Kingdom from any conception of it as an external, unethical happening of an apocalyptic character. Essential to the very idea of the new order He establishes is the doing of the righteous Will, which includes all justice, truth, and mercy for men on the earth. In opposition to the

narrow, self-bound cares that afflict mankind is placed this all-embracing ideal of a new heaven and earth in which dwelleth righteousness, that Kingdom which, as Luke's version of the saying has it, it is the Father's good pleasure to give to men. The aspiration for this magnificent possibility, and the effort to realize it in all the relations of life one with another, can so absorb the mind and spirit as to leave no mental room for personal worry. Every occupation which holds the attention to wholesome interest and activity is so far a deliverance from anxiety, but close occupation with the Kingdom takes in all these temporary alleviations and transcends them with a permanent state of mind and heart which can keep the life in perfect peace.

Along with this noble preoccupation Jesus teaches a fundamental trust. The ground on which this confidence can be realized is the Heavenly Father's purpose to supply all things needful to the life and to impart to all men the highest and fullest blessings. Believe this, He counsels, and then go straight on living in free, valiant endeavour to realize His purpose. The Father knows the human need, and while His servants are concerned about His Kingdom in the world, all needful good will be assured. That does not mean seeking the Kingdom apart from our daily duties, as the knights of Arthur left the realm in which they were doing valiant service with their leader, for what proved a barren quest for the vision of the mystic Grail. The Kingdom must be found in the midst of our everyday faithfulness to common duty. Human working, thinking, planning, providing, are not to cease. Foresight for the to-morrows of life, intelligent anticipation of events and requirements are not to be disregarded. In and by these activities and co-operations men and nations are to seek the abiding good of others, the wealth of the world and

the glory of God. These acts of wisdom and labour are part of our seeking and serving in the Kingdom of God as surely as they are part of our national kingdoms. Christian men are to be business-like in the affairs of the world, but beneath all their sagacity and alertness there is to be the central trust of their hearts that He whom they are serving in faithfulness to the duties He has called them to discharge will act along with, beneath and above and within, all their toil and sacrifice. Anxiety in these affairs, and in general life, cannot be avoided. It is a necessary part of human education. Without it there would be no virtue in the trust. But beneath it all, saving it from a mischievous excess and overbalance, is to be the sense of the All-bountiful Provider who uses all human faithfulness and wisdom to supply the needs of the widespread human family. In periods of national and personal trial it would often be mockery to say, "Do not be anxious." That would be extremely unpractical. The anxiety is in man's life blood, and is on behalf of those dearer than life, and for causes larger than any personal concern. But this again is part of the Kingdom for which our constant concern is summoned. And even this most natural anxiety may be enfolded in the deeper trust and peace. Anxiety may be according to the will of God, but worry never is. The one may have the sense of God beneath it, but worry is the negation of that fundamental trust.

Now see the beautiful, genial way Jesus would encourage men to live this free, happy life. He puts Himself alongside the poorest and neediest, those whose existence is most precarious, those on whom the commonplace necessities press most severely. Why, He asks, are you so full of care and anxiety about food and clothing? The life is more than meat, and the body than raiment. That has been interpreted as a call to

the life of the soul which is more than food. This would be in accord with His purpose to deliver from anxiety in external affairs by a deeper, inner concern. But it does not apply to the whole saying, which deals with the body as well as the spiritual life. And it would not be so appropriate for those who were in peril of hunger and nakedness. Jesus comes very close to His brothers and says God has given your life and your body, and these are much greater gifts than the needful food and clothing. Having given the greater, you may be sure He will not refuse the less. And He goes on to appeal to troubled men and women to allow the Divine beneficence to lift up the sense of the human value and the personal value in His sight. Be assured that He who feeds the birds in their happy, careless existence will not fail to feed His children. These "commoners of air," as Burns calls them, neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, yet God feedeth them; He makes the lilies grow, which neither toil nor spin, and clothes them in glory surpassing Solomon's; the grass of the field, which exists for its brief day and then becomes fuel for the oven, He clothes in wonder, and will He not much more clothe you? If no living creature, no fragile plant that grows in this wide world, is forgotten of Him, how much more will He remember men and women and children? Let all men know their value in the Divine sight and trust His constant care.

Our mind and strength are to be given to the seeking of our living. Even the birds and the flowers are ceaselessly active in the work proper to them. But our strength is not to be given so all-absorbingly as though everything depended upon our energy and labour. The facts of life teach that anxious care can secure very little for us. Surely with a touch of genial humour Jesus puts His challenge, What can your anxious care

do for you ? Can it make you grow eighteen inches ? We are apt to think that to cause ourselves to grow taller, by any means, much more by exercising our mind concerning it, would be something passing wonderful. In Luke's version Jesus says it is something very small. If you cannot do that which is least, why worry about the rest ? To make ourselves taller is a trivial matter compared with providing food and raiment for a world, which is continually accomplished by the Divine love and care. At the final issue we are absolutely dependent, not upon our toil and foresight, but upon the creative bounty of the infinite Provider. The poorest and richest alike depend upon Him, for if no harvests come to our world, no wealth could buy a day's bread. A man's honest work, his skill, his understanding help to provide for the world's need. The glory of his competent work is that it allies him " with Him who doth provide, and not with those who partake." But his worry is perfectly useless. It can do nothing for any human soul, cannot make one blade of grass grow in the field, cannot ripen one head of corn, cannot add one least item to human welfare.

If anxiety, then, can do so little, why should men think it necessary ? And why spend time and strength in querulous questioning, " What shall we eat, what shall we drink, with what shall we be clothed ? " when we may have beneath all our need in life's utmost uncertainty the assurance of the infinite knowledge and care. The Father knoweth that you have need of these things. Having given us so much, He can be trusted to give us all that is required. And therefore, over-anxiety in regard to getting our living is pagan. "After all these things do the Gentiles seek." They may without much shame be absorbed in these lower concerns, but those who understand the true and abiding ends of life

cannot without reproach follow their example. The follower of Jesus, in all his labour and wise forethought, and beyond it all, is to have mind and affection occupied with the deepest welfare of humanity and with the honour of God. In taking his part as a worker, wasting nothing, producing all that is possible, he follows his high calling as a son of the Kingdom ; but the highest place, in honour and devotion, is to be given to the Kingdom itself. " Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." The chief anxiety of every right man is to be that the Rule of God shall be established and perpetuated in the race ; that every evil power on the earth shall diminish and every noble cause shall increase. The Kingdom of God includes every true kingdom of Man, for it underlies and gives inspiration to every desire to enrich the mind of the world with larger vision, truer perception, and more adequate achievement. It takes up all high ambition, all honest labour, for these ends of man, and transcends them. It is scarcely yet understood how the spiritual element of life is essential to every true artistic achievement which, without these unmeasured forces of the higher Kingdom, can never reach their goal. The kingdoms of Man come to their own in the realization of the Kingdom of God. None of them can suffer by making the spiritual paramount in all their endeavour. And in the more ordinary realms of life, this supreme desire, at the root of all faithful work, the strength of all joy and pleasure, will give unity and prosperity to the whole life. Let a man set the glowing hope of that Kingdom in his heart, do everything for the sake of it, then he can be truly said to have a religion. His whole work on earth will become a prayer. " Thy Kingdom come, and not the devil's kingdom. Then our religion will be as an everlasting loadstar that becomes the brighter in

the heavens, the darker the night gathers round our earth." [1]

This glorious Rule of God in the earth is a reality. Myriads own its sway and live by its inspiration. Its destiny is to absorb the whole interest, enthusiasm, and labour of man. It requires far-sighted plans, wide-reaching vision. For its future, men and churches and nations must take long views. True concern in that large Divine outlook will enable men to take short views about all things else. The genial wisdom of Jesus is that all these necessary goods of life shall be added to the Kingdom which is sought and found, shall come in the train of the spiritual benefit. The idea is not that so much devotion to the Kingdom shall be rewarded by so much material blessing. Solomon chose, as his chief good, an understanding heart to judge his people, and riches and honour which he had not chosen were added to the understanding. The best means of attaining these was by the wisdom given along with the blessing of God. And fundamentally the most successful way of gaining " the other things " of our need is by a mind made calm and strong in devotion of the whole being to the Divine purpose. " These things shall be added," Jesus assures men. And therefore, do not be over-anxious for the morrow. The tense of the verb seems to mean, do not even begin to scrutinize too minutely the necessities of the coming days. The inevitable cares of to-day are sufficient concern to your mind. To-morrow will bring its own needs and its own evil to contend with. Let the present duty absorb your heart. Live for to-day. Some have indeed compared this delightful counsel to the *carpe diem* of Horace. But between the thoughtless Epicurean want of care and that of the Christian, what is there in common ? The one

[1] Carlyle, *Past and Present*, ch. xv.

philosophy throws care to the winds, the other casts it on the Lord. The freedom from care which Christ commends is not that of negligence but of faith.[1] Do your duty in the present, and trust all future days to Him who knows and cares. Bravely, cheerfully meet any evil that comes, in the power of a great trust. Do not borrow evil from the future by a fearful imagination. Do not cross the dark river that seems to be in front until you come to it. You may find the rough stream easy to ford or spanned by a bridge. While using your best wisdom for yourself and others, seek the abiding Kingdom of everlasting righteousness, and "the work of that righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of it quietness and assurance for ever."

[1] Tholuck, *in loc.* on *Sermon on the Mount.*

PART VI

THE CHARITY OF RELIGION

Matt. vii. 1–12; Luke vi. 37–42, vi. 31.

Chapter XXVIII. Harsh Judgment.

,, XXIX. The Way of the Higher Attainment.

,, XXX. The Golden Ladder.

CHAPTER XXVIII

HARSH JUDGMENT

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."—MATT. vii. 1–6.

"Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. And He spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch? The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye."—LUKE vi. 37–42.

THE words "judge" and "judgment," like their Greek originals, have such a wide range of meaning, from the simplest human discrimination between things that differ to the highest decisions of the Church or the Divine Lord of the Church, that they must be inter-

preted in connection with their context, including verse 6, and with a reasonable application of common sense. The whole passage makes clear that Jesus had in mind censorious judgments passed on others, especially when expressed publicly. The root sin is in the heart, but the mischief is made in society as well as in the inward life of the self-appointed judge. Harsh, unsympathetic judgments upon others are deeply opposed to the whole spirit of Jesus. They are also a fruitful source of human dispeace. We have witnessed whole nations being vindictively hung, drawn, and quartered without knowledge and without mercy; men and women with nerves on edge indulging all kinds of uncharity, and forgetting the wholesome teaching of our Lord to remember our own faults and sins, and to refrain from censure of others.

Jesus is far from discouraging a proper judgment of human affairs and individual actions, without which we cannot guide our own course in life, and which, if exercised with sympathy and humility, may prove a restraining influence and even be part of the Divine judgment. This well-controlled use of our critical powers is implied in the call to "judge righteous judgment, and not according to appearances." And where nothing but appearances are to hand, even the most righteous judgment is silent. Our Lord Himself rightly pilloried many types of evil spirit and conduct, but He often refused to condemn those whom others called the guilty.

Censorious judgment gains its most subtle hold on men just because it has its ground in a proper faculty of our nature. The necessary criticism may pass with fatal facility into uncharitableness. Religious people are specially subject to this peril because of their intense interest in the right character of their fellows. Some

find their readiest method of expressing their own conviction of truth and zeal for religion in condemnation of others who differ from themselves. The method is happily decreasing. A larger outlook, a deeper insight, reveals that even genuinely mistaken opinions are not always due to a reprobate mind, and that what we regard as erroneous ideas may contain some elements of truth which are necessary to complete our own thought. But much evil judging has no connection with any conspicuous conviction or Christian zeal. An undisciplined imagination, a desire to cover personal failure by implicating others, may start an ill-report and give it currency which the most careful pains afterwards cannot overtake. When feathers are plucked from a neighbour's reputation and flung to the winds, these adorning and protective feathers are not to be easily re-gathered. When we are flying kites like white-winged birds, we can at will draw them in again. "We can't do that way when we're flying words." [1]

In dealing with this notorious evil, Jesus does not begin by saying how wrong and mischievous it is, but how grotesque. He uses this image of the man with a beam in his eye, who poses as one who can see better than most people, to show the vast absurdity of human censoriousness. No man can be conceived as so senseless in the ordinary affairs of life. The beam in an eye is one of the impossibilities of even grotesqueness. But even more grotesque is that which happens in the mind and spirit of men. What can be so ridiculous as a man with a great fault, a gross sin, in his own character and spirit setting up as a moral censor of faults in others? What can be so ludicrous as for any one to be observant of the faults of some one else, and forgetful of his own? And the absurdity is increased when the

[1] Will Carleton.

fault of which the censor is oblivious is a far greater offence than those he censures. The greater fault, which is evidently in mind, is the censorious spirit. Ever ready to detect and publish the errors and failings of others, men reveal a beam-like sin in themselves to which most faults of character are but specks. In their heart is the gross, all-defiling sin of uncharity. Charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtue, makes all possible allowances for others, searches for the hidden causes of human perversion, and if it cannot trace these forces, it believes the Divine eye can, and does. It refuses to condemn any whose secret life can be so little followed. And here the suggestion plainly is that the least refined in spirit are those who put the worst construction on the deeds and motives of their fellows.

The crown of this absurdity is the man with a beam-like fault trying to remove smaller faults of other men. To remove a tiny irritating substance from a human eye is a delicate operation, requiring knowledge and skill, and, above all, clear vision. Without these qualifications the practitioner will do more harm than good. And to remove a fault from a fellow-man's character is an even more delicate task. The attempt must often be made. Parents do it for their children, sometimes in very clumsy fashion. The intimacy of the marriage relation consists largely in the mutual doing of this by husband and wife. One of the surest marks of a pure Christian character is skill in helping others to overcome their faults. It requires rare insight into the springs of action and the complexity of the mind and spirit, a fine tact and geniality. It demands, above all, humility and charity, the very opposites of censoriousness. Only the deep lovers of men can be of genuine service in removing human errors and evils. For any proud, selfish, evil-eyed, willing censor of others to

attempt it is the very height of grotesque presumption. " First cast out the beam from your own eye, and then you shall see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." Anything short of this is pretence of a charitable motive which is not possessed. It is posing as a helper of men, and thereby disguising the hidden malice of the heart. It is hypocrisy.

The other thought with which this passage begins and ends is that this judging of others is dangerous work to the judge. The evils which afflict society and nations because of it are not in mind here, but only the perils to the self-constituted censor. " Condemn not, that you may not be condemned. For with what judgment you judge you shall be judged, and the measure you deal out to others shall be dealt out to you." Censorious judgments come back on their author. The standard set up to condemn others will stand to try the critics. The gallows they erect to hang their neighbour will be used to gibbet them. Most immediately men's judgment is in mind. If they become aware of ungenerous treatment from others, it will make them suspicious and unjust in their turn. They will retaliate, and so the flame of mutual resentment will be fed. Envy, malice, and all uncharitableness will be sown broadcast, and the harvest which no man can foresee many will share. Men will truly, even though unjustifiably, measure out to us as we deal to them. They are so intimately bound, the one to the other, so deeply members of each other, that not even the most unsocial censor of his kind can escape the mischief he initiates. A measure of Divine retribution is to be discerned in this working of human life which becomes more manifest when the inward life is searched. Generous judgments, gracious sympathies dealt out to others, make our nature generous and gracious, hospitable to all kindly truths and sweet

charities. They prepare a highway of the Lord for all the purest disclosures of the Infinite. On the other hand, ungenerous judgments, habitually preferred, most of all malicious declarations against our fellows, narrow our nature, close it against true human sympathy and generosity which would otherwise find expression. They atmosphere our world with suspicion. Cynical eyes look out from the frankest countenance. Disagreeable realities crowd into the narrow space left in the life, as into their most congenial abiding-place. The power of believing in goodness, human or Divine, becomes atrophied. The heavenly generosity disappears from our horizon, for the ability to appreciate it is lost. The harshness bestowed comes back on itself with tragic power.

The whole passage concludes with a tremendously strong exposure of the disastrous working of evil-minded judging. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you." These strong words are commonly regarded as quite separate from what goes before them, like an erratic boulder of quite different geological nature and origin from the soil where it lodges. It is supposed to have no connection in thought with the warnings against wrong judging, whereas it may be shown to have the most intimate connection, revealing our Lord's most solemn sense of that widespread evil. Or if the words are accepted as part of the condemnation of censoriousness, they are regarded as "a needful and very effectual counteractive to the verbally unqualified prohibition of the first and second verses of the chapter." But this interpretation does more than qualify our Lord's broad prohibition, it destroys it. Various forms are assumed by this false reading of the words. The

casting of pearls before swine has become proverbial, and use is made of it far remote from its original intention. It is quoted against opening museums and picture galleries for the masses, or against providing them with good art or music, or "over-educating" their children. Others fall back upon it when the pearls of their own poetry or their masterpieces of painting are not appreciated by the popular mind. In a different realm, competent expositors interpret it as a necessary caution against placing the pure truths and experiences of life (some particularize the holy things of the Sacraments) before the low-minded, the wilfully coarse and ignorant.[1] Undoubtedly reserve must be observed in revealing the intimacies of life and sacred experiences before even the best and most delightful persons who do not know us. We must earn the right before declaring our intimate experience to others, or searching into theirs. Evil-minded persons must, it is said, first be made ashamed of themselves, but it is not said what can so effectually produce this desirable shame as the tendernesses of our religion. Also, if this interpretation stands, we are at liberty, if not under obligation, to pronounce judgment on our fellow-mortals. Some we may put down as essentially snarling and cynical, others as swinish in spirit and temper, and from these chosen objects of our censure we are to withhold the best things of life. Jesus Himself, we are told, refused to tell the scribes and Pharisees by what authority

[1] Professor J. A. Findlay, in the *Realism of Jesus*, suggests an Aramaic original, which by a slight change becomes "signet ring" instead of holy things. He reads the thought thus: "Your fellowship with Me and with each other is your signet ring, your circlet of pearls. This sacred bond is not to be exposed to the tender mercies of cynical outsiders and scandalmongers." So he gets connection with the preceding prohibitions, yet inconsistently he too detaches it from them. But his suggestion approaches to a more satisfactory understanding of the words before us.

He did His work, and He did decline to answer the insincere questionings of men bent on mischief. But He never refused to reveal the heart of His authority to any human being. The nature of His authority could not be "told." It must be manifested and then spiritually discerned. And His condemnation of those who despised the uninstructed people as mere rabble was a searching, withering fire. We may be sure that the Master of Charity called no men swine or dogs. Such contempt, even for the most evil-minded and unclean, was foreign to His gracious spirit. Nor does He encourage His followers to so blaspheme their kind, either by thought or speech or action. Rather He warns most profoundly against any approach to the censorious mind, the base spirit which can seize with avidity on the evil of others. We are surely warranted by the whole personality of Jesus, and by the thoroughly satisfactory ethics which the interpretation yields, to maintain that the holy things, the pearls of which He speaks, are the sacred treasures of human life and sensibility, in ourselves and in others, not only the bonds of Christian fellowship, but the holy ties which bind all men, even the most common, together. In stupid folly, or wicked malice, or in self-righteous conceit, men may cast that which is holy in the sensibilities of others to the dogs and swine. Considerable knowledge of the habitués of prisons has revealed that the last treasure these men and women part with is their self-respect. Nothing can so hurt them, or make them inaccessible, as contempt. These sanctities, as God sees them, may be flung to all that is contentious and evil-minded. To give the delicacies of a man's good name, or the flowers of a woman's reputation, to be trodden down by the defiling feet of uncharity, to be torn asunder and flung aside by coarse hands, and wanton cruel

hearts, what is this but to give that which is holy unto the dogs and to cast pearls before swine ? To mishandle the reputation of the virtuous is criminal, and can we call by any other name all ruthless dealing with the name of the unvirtuous ? Jesus, when confronted with the woman taken in adultery, made it plain that other kinds of dealing with sinful man or woman must come before condemnation. He Himself looked steadfastly on the ground, as if He would avoid beholding the shame of the guilty woman, and still more the shameless gloating faces of her accusers. Tender chivalry marked His entire spirit. And shall any sinful mortal deal less tenderly either with sacred human virtue or with sacred human frailty ?

But not only the holy things of others are involved, but the finest endowments of our own inner life. The pearls of personality, those qualities which make us one with the Divine : the reason fashioned by an immanent Deity, the conscience made sensitive to the Holy Spirit, the power of sympathy with God and man—these are given over, by uncharity, to the tusks of all that is hard, selfish, and unclean in ourselves. The better nature is put within the destructive grasp of the worst, to be rent and trampled down with the contempt of things contemptible. While cruel mischief is wrought on the life of our brothers by reckless condemnation, a deeper injury is done to our best self.

Such a reading of our Lord's words does far more honour to His holy mind than to suppose that He, who took so great risks in His vocation, advises men to withhold the noble things of the spirit from those who most need their comfort and inspiration, lest they should treat these holy things with contempt and spend their evil rage in personal assault. It also expresses the pre-eminence of love in Jesus and His reverence for

the human nature God has made. Love alone can be a righteous judge of anything that concerns man. It will never venture to condemn any one, least of all when it cannot see and know. It will also see beneath the surface and find reasons for abounding charity. So far from it being blind, nothing else can see. It works no ill to its neighbour. It thinketh no evil, looks ever for the best in every man, rejoices in the best, and when it finds the worst, it shields it with tender care from all unjust censure. It shields the worst by the best, draws around it the protecting love of Him who said, "Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more." And doing so, it protects its own life from the ravages of the dogs and swine.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE WAY OF THE HIGHER ATTAINMENT

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"—MATT. vii. 7–11.

"And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"—LUKE xi. 9–13.

AT first sight there seems little connection between these words and those that precede them. Yet there is intimate moral connection, for, after the evil of censoriousness has been exposed and the better way of charity suggested, the question still remains how to acquire the spirit which refrains from condemnatory judgment. Charity in regard to our fellows is one clear example of that spiritual advancement which Jesus clearly has in mind. What applies to this difficulty which all men feel when they are in earnest about living the Christian life, applies to every other difficulty.

The habit of thinking and speaking ill of one an-

other has its roots deep in human nature, for it is the excess of what is a necessary activity of mental being. Therefore, He who knows the intricacies of the human heart urgently counsels all men, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." The first requirement is earnest desire for deliverance from a great evil, and realization of the need of Divine help. Seeing how nature's social union is broken in men and nations, and what stubborn knots are formed in the human spirit by censoriousness, we are encouraged to express the very heart of ourselves before the face of God. In other words, we pray, we ask of Him who giveth to all men liberally, in every need of our spiritual advancement. We ask and we go on asking, our whole nature turning into the ever-present grace. From this intense reality of the asking, the other injunction naturally follows—"Seek." Prayer is no barren, idle expression of our desire, as if nothing else were needed, as though God would magically bestow the gift for which our tongue has asked. Genuine asking involves seeking. "One thing have I desired, that will I seek after." The desire is so vital a part of the life that it cannot but set itself to secure its end. A life organized with systematic method and purpose is the surest and best answer to the prayer. The children of light are to be just as alert and business-like in obtaining their great ends as unscrupulous rascals are to gain their low and selfish ends. The inward desire will make for a ceaseless ingenuity in seeking the way to the spiritual goal. And then, when in the course of the enthusiastic seeking, some particularly obstinate difficulty is encountered, the call is for a distinct and concentrated effort, which is the culmination of all the asking and seeking—"Knock." All the doors of life's opportunity are to be persistently approached. Any-

thing which will reveal the surpassing beauty and worth of Charity, which will increase personal acquaintance with the objects of our threatened censure, which will bring the life into fellowship with the Incarnation of generous judgment, will be sought after with all the energies of our spirit.

Jesus reveals the sure way of attainment for all Christian ambition. Not only can evil be destroyed, but good can be built up ; not only peril be averted, but the life enriched with truth and beauty by His counsel. " For every one that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." These words speak of no trivial desires on the surface of the life, asked for to spare personal pain and inconvenience, but of the deep necessities to make our life worthy and efficient for the best ends. The riches of the Spirit are always granted to living desire. Indeed, as Augustine says, God has already given them by moving the desire. The too common idea that asking in prayer gives a right to expect what is asked immediately, and in the form it is desired, is born of shallowness and irreverence. What men desire may never come as it is desired. Monica, the mother of Augustine, prayed that her son might not be allowed to go to Rome lest he might there be corrupted. But on his way there he was converted, and thus it was said God gave her the hinge of her desire. And earnestness in asking, seeking, and knocking for any good which is good indeed, will surely obtain the hinge, the vital matter on which the deep impulse of the being is turning.

This is the confidence which Jesus seeks to implant deeply in the life of men. God who is good will give all that is good to His children who truly desire it. His argument is simple yet profound, based upon something which is not to be doubted by any man, on something

verifiable by all because it is that which is deepest and surest in himself. He makes direct appeal to the common human nature, as He does throughout the whole Sermon. Will any of you that is a father be so undiscerning, so unkind, so unfatherly as to give evil instead of good to your children—a stone instead of bread, a serpent instead of a fish, a scorpion instead of an egg ? The confident answer which He Himself gives is, No. You, being evil, are not so blind, so perverted, as to work injury to your own offspring. You know how to give good gifts unto your children. Jesus appeals to the essential man, beneath all the evil which besets his life. Perhaps He glances in passing at those unnatural parents so possessed by some infatuation, or perverted by some physiological or psychological infirmity, that in fact they bring curse instead of blessing to their own flesh and blood. While being so deeply evil, they will not fail to feel the force of His gracious argument, for they, too, know what they ought to do for their children. The knowledge is in their nature as men, it is that which is likest God within the soul. The most abnormal parent knows how to give good gifts to his children.

This nature in man as man is no fiction, no offspring of imagination, but solid fact and reality. It is the best evidence we possess of the existence of One who is unchangeably good, the Source of the noblest instincts of human nature. The argument rises from a sound base when it says, " If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Heavenly Father give good things to them that ask Him ? " St. Luke's version says, " give the Holy Spirit," which includes every good possible to man's enduring life. This appeal to the elemental instinct is the argument " from the gift to the Giver, from the cistern to

the River, from the finite to Infinity, and from man's dust to God's Divinity." [1] Browning tells of the longing of the young David to comfort and deliver the troubled life of Saul, the king, his "father":

> "Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,
> To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would." [2]

And the nearer our fatherhoods and motherhoods approach to that passion to impart the fullest and highest blessing to those dearest to our heart, the more forcefully will this deep, human appeal convince and possess our life. The "how much more" of Jesus will inspire our asking in some measure more worthy of His bounty. "Hitherto," Jesus said, "have ye asked nothing in My name," nothing at all commensurate with the Divine fulness expressed in that Name. Our desires for the enduring good of life, for the blessing of the Eternal, the joy, the wisdom, and the peace which Jesus Christ can give, are feeble and paltry, sounding like a poor scrannel pipe before a mighty orchestra. Jesus calls men to enlarge their desires, to revitalize their spiritual ambitions, to ask that they may receive, to seek that they may find, to knock that the doors of life's fulness may be opened and all moral attainment become possible.

[1] Browning, "Christmas Eve." [2] Browning, "Saul."

CHAPTER XXX

THE GOLDEN LADDER

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."—MATT. vii. 12.

"And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."—LUKE vi. 31.

ST. LUKE gives this "Golden Rule" in close connection with our Lord's startling words regarding non-resistance and ceaseless benevolence. It is the summing-up of these injunctions, giving them a more sweeping scope. But a principle so simple yet so profound, so adapted to the nature of man as man, must have been most attractive to the mind of Jesus. No wonder if He used it frequently in His teaching, for it was so apt at every turn of His thought. It is most congruous with all that has gone before in this passage. The purpose has been to establish men's confidence in God's willingness to bestow all spiritual blessing and all true good. The basis of the confidence is laid in a man's own willingness to give the best to his children. And now the thought is taken down to even more comprehensive human ground, and man's knowledge of his social duty is placed on the same base. Parents may be unparental, and the appeal may largely fail on behalf of the Divine Fatherhood. But man as man, good or bad, wise or unwise, instructed or ignorant, savage or civilized, knows what he likes others to do to him habitually, or when he is in need or trouble, or any kind of a tight

place. What he naturally desires from his brother men—sympathy, understanding, help, and good cheer—let him give to his brothers. That is the Golden Principle with which the great Teacher rounds off His treatment of the Jewish religion. In what may be regarded as the main body of the Sermon, He begins by declaring His purpose not to destroy the Law but to fulfil it, by taking it all down to root principles of positive human virtue. And He leaves it here firmly built upon what every man knows in himself to be right. This principle, like the New Testament commandments, He says is the Law and the Prophets. It sums up the best laws and inspirations which have ever visited the heart of man, in Jewish times, and before and since the Law and the Prophets. With the same trust in human instinct, Jesus pictures the great Assize where the conditions of acceptance with God are acts of obedience to the knowledge common to the heart of all men.[1]

Probably Jesus knew this principle as it was propounded by Hillel, the Jewish rabbi, in the first century B.C. : " What thou hatest thyself, that do not thou to others. This is the whole of the Law—all the rest is only comment upon it." He would not be embarrassed, but confirmed and delighted to discover this fruitful principle in a Jewish teacher. If He ever learnt that the same principle was forecasted in China by Confucius five hundred years before His time, and in Greece by the poet Isocrates a little later than the Chinese sage, it would give Him greater satisfaction, confirming His faith that God was in the very soil of the race. He wanted to plant His new morality in that life of a common humanity, where men of every land and nation might be brought together. Unless this human ground can be realized, the wide, scattered peoples may live in mutual

[1] Matt. xxv.

misunderstanding to the end of time. Those who regard our Lord's teaching as not meant to apply to organized society or to international affairs, may ponder this clear intention to find a human principle which every living soul may reasonably acknowledge. When the Council of the League of Nations, or its equivalent, meets, at the head of all their proceedings, on every page of their documents, this Chinese-Greek saying, as transformed by the great Lover of men, might well be inscribed. In every language under the sun it would read well and be universally intelligible. Whatever form of religion or moral obligation the statesmen acknowledge, this will put the crown upon it. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

Jesus desired no originality which would cut Him off from the Divine purpose in the past of the human race. His originality consisted in giving wider scope, greater depths to whatever men had seen of the truth of life. Here He simply transforms the principle by changing it from the negative to the positive, and by living out the principle. Others had said, "What you do not like done to you, do not to others." Jesus said, "Whatsoever you would like men to do to you, do ye even so to them." Even the negative form was great. It involves a great achievement, much greater than many think who claim to "do no harm to anybody." It suffers, as all negatives do, for want of inward inspiration. But even so, it has a tremendously wide scope. It sums up all the Ten Commandments. But our Lord's glorious positive sums up the New Testament, and includes all that was possible even to Himself. Instead of being a barren, narrow prohibition, it becomes a fruitful, ever-expanding spirit of life. It grows to a larger demand upon us as our own nature enlarges. That is the greatness of it, leaving far below any "thou shalt

not." At a certain stage, our idea of the good we desire is very limited. We would like life to give us physical comfort, mental quiet, human companionship, sympathy, friendship, to make us feel we are not forgotten in our need. We would like men to give us these graciously and generously. Then give these as widely and pleasantly as we can to others. We know the kind of hospital we would like if we were in sickness or distress. Help to maintain that kind of hospital. We see quite clearly what healthy surroundings we desire for our own children. Secure these for the children of others. We are very resolute in wanting a peaceful world for our own sons. League yourself with men as widely as possible on behalf of all men's sons. That is the principle, but if we live according to it in these lower needs of life, we cannot but gain a higher and finer thought of our true good. The desire for human friendship will lead on to the desire for the Divine friendship which is the Eternal source of the human. Truth in the soul, the comfort of an indwelling Spirit, the assurance of never-failing help in the ever-living Christ will become our necessities. And so our duty towards our fellow-beings takes on a nobler range. The rising sense of our own capacities for lasting spiritual good will correspondingly enlarge our obligation to all whom God has made. We shall not be able to rest in the light, leaving others out in the darkness, as sheep which have no shepherd. The shepherd heart will be born into our life, and all social enthusiasm, all missionary enterprise, lie there. To say that if we can get the help we need in our distress of body or of mind, others may look after themselves, is to refuse the first steps in this Golden Ladder of Christ.

Some say this ideal is too high, too splendid, to be practicable. Verily, it *is* high, like Jacob's ladder,

reaching from earth to heaven. It is splendid, for if it could be generally practised, in the smaller circles and the larger circles of mankind, it would bring in the reign of Peace and Goodwill on the earth. But splendid though it is and because it is, it is gloriously practicable. It can be applied at once, in the simplest duties of life. It brings blessing and profit everywhere. It works splendidly in a home, a business, a school, a workshop, a bank, an exchange. Boys and girls may do unto others as they like done to them, in their school, their play. It would make them fair and kind, and help them to play the game. Husbands and wives will find their best good, their undivided joy, in observing this lovely word of Jesus. It would bring a new flood of strength into national stability if masters would keep the principle with their servants and servants with their masters. It would make a new world in which hatred and strife could have no place. The glorious Ideal stands before us as a great City of God whose turrets may continually gleam over these common lives of ours. But no one need leave his common duty to find his way there. This King's Highway of Holiness, where the flowers grow and the birds sing and the scene expands continually before mind and heart, leads directly from our own doorstep. Therefore, whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, do you even so to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

PART VII

THE URGENCY OF JESUS

Matt. vii. 13–27.

Chapter XXXI. The Great Alternative.
„ XXXII. The Test of Reality.
„ XXXIII. The House of Life.
„ XXXIV. The Authority of the Sermon: Epilogue.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE GREAT ALTERNATIVE

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."—MATT. vii. 13–14.

"Then said one unto Him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And He said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."—LUKE xiii. 23–24.

WE approach the final words of the Sermon. To call it the peroration might be misleading, for all is so transparent, direct, and urgent. The impressive contrasts are not the conscious expression of an artist, but the unconscious art of a vivid soul. In them all, the self-forgetful Master of Truth is seeking to bring men face to face with the issues at stake in His religion, and to awaken them to its solemn obligation. The teaching has been given. The ideal of all right conduct has been set up. And now, Jesus puts forth all the strength of His spirit to bring to the mind and conscience the necessity of the principles He taught.

And first, He would impress the fact that the wonder of this life which He has so enthusiastically declared can not be realized by any man on the surface of his nature. He can neither saunter nor drift into the Christian Kingdom. Manly energy is required. St. Luke adds the word: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many shall seek to enter in and shall not be

able." The resolution and conflict demanded is implied in the strenuous nature of the whole appeal. Our Lord seems to answer the unspoken thought of His hearers, who would not fail to reveal their feeling that He had asked hard things: "Yes, the gate is strait. Do you therefore enter in." [1] Jesus believed in man's ability, reinforced as it was by those Divine forces in which the man lives and moves and has his being. And He rings out a challenge, to that manhood God has made, to begin the right life set before it. No man can presume to declare the Christian religion to be impracticable unless he has tried it in the concentrated energy of life. Aimlessness and slackness can help a man nowhere, least of all in the lofty enterprise of the soul. Men have to be willing to be strict with themselves. Failure waits upon every attempt to find easier terms. The necessity for strictness is not popular. A former generation is said to have been too straitlaced in its observance of religion. So far as this was true, the strictness was about the wrong things. Men may be too strict about human traditions, ancient habits, and matters of individual taste and opinion. They may forget the advice of the minister to David Balfour to "be soople in things immaterial." But no one can be too strict about truthfulness and honour, chivalry and charity. Earnestness cannot be too concentrated in seeking to serve God and to advance His Kingdom.

> "The sin I impute to each frustrate ghost
> Is the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin."[2]

[1] Professor B. W. Bacon (*Hibbert Journal*, Jan. 1923), for no assigned reason, suggests not *strait*, but *half-shut*, apparently to bring it into the apocalyptic zone of idea—a door gradually shutting as the opportunity lessened, before the imminent end. But the thought is rather of an entrance into obedience, which is narrow in the nature of things.

[2] Browning, "The Statue and the Bust."

These frustrate ghosts abound, not only in regard to religion, but in every other concern of life. In practical affairs and in the following of Christ, success is only achieved on the lines laid down by the Divine Teacher. Success in business means hard work, close application, self-denial. Competence in any profession is only gained through the strait gate. A writer has to be strict with his writing, sternly rejecting as well as forcibly expressing. The obvious is far from being always valuable. The necessity is laid on the literary artist "to contend for the shade of a word, and the thing not seen with the eyes." [1] There is a royal road to learning —the way of self-mastery. All through life men come to their rightful heritage by the narrow way, both in the sacred and what we unthinkingly call the secular, for the principle is the same, the only difference, in the affairs of the soul, being the vastness of the issue.

To impress the nature of life's choice, He makes use of the eternal contrast between the Two Ways of Life and of Death. He would find it in the sacred books of His nation.[2] It is implicit in other parts of the Sermon and of the Synoptics. The Fourth Gospel seems to have taken the idea, and into the mould which our Lord used has poured what to it is the Master's most characteristic thought—Light and Darkness, Life and Death. The extent to which the idea was implanted in the Early Church may be judged by its prominence in the *Didache*, a small Jewish Christian manual of instruction in the teaching and practice of the Apostles which was discovered in a Jerusalem monastery in 1875, and published in 1883. This little book of the closing years of the first Christian century has collected all the contents of its earlier part round the idea of the Two

[1] R. L. Stevenson, "If that were Faith."

[2] Deut. xxx.; Jer. xvii. 5–8, xxi. 8; Ps. i.; Prov. iv.

Ways, and receives its unity from it. There is reason to believe that this older part consisted of only the six chapters which contain the description of these two contrasted ways. The idea achieved much popularity in these early years, for it is frequently found, verbally or substantially, in the literature of the time.[1] As Jesus uses the figure, it has a concentrated force which becomes poignant. In a few words the great alternatives are set forth—the two gates, the two ways, the two goals.

The one issue of human thought and conduct has the wide gate and the broad way. The chief emphasis is laid by Jesus on the fatal ease of the way down, in contrast with the hardness of the way up. The gate swings open at the least touch. Men may pass through it carrying what they please. At its portals no questions are asked, no qualifications are needed. A man may take with him his pride, his laziness, his appetites, his vices, his greed. He can enter the wide gate to the broad way, thinking lightly of past evil, or refusing to think at all. No difficulties debar from going down. The reins need only be given to the ease-loving, self-regarding instincts. And the way is popular with the crowd. "Many there be that go in thereat." But the issue to which the way directly leads is destruction. The existence of one who pursues that way is not broad and wide, not a life of freedom and delight, but a narrowing, withering, haunted existence. Bunyan was not prompted by any fanatical imagination when he describes a life of carelessness and godlessness as a City of Destruction. One would rather veil the eyes of the spirit while considering the end of that way to a human

[1] The Epistle of Barnabas, the Apostolic Constitutions, and the Apostolic Church Ordinances, and many other writings, either explicitly or implicitly.

soul. The whole way is one in which the life perishes. As step by step the way is traversed, deterioration overtakes the spirit. The fine nature is undermined, and not only by sins of the flesh. Carelessness, frivolity, excessive love of pleasure and excitement, disregard of God and forgetfulness of man, these, not less than coarse appetites, "harden all within and petrify the feeling." The way leads to destruction, and it is destruction. To walk in it is death to the spirit.

The other issue which Jesus sets before men is that of the strait gate and the narrow way. The way is strait because it requires the subordination of every impulse, every interest, to the one great purpose for which we are here in this life at all. It requires the surrender of all self-regarding inclinations to the Supreme will. Renunciation is not the word to use, for nothing that is pleasant and good in life has to be renounced when self is denied as a centre of action and a new and Divine motive is taken for all the being. But the surrender demands the girding of the loins of the mind, the exercise of resolution, not just once in the experience, but all along the way. The gate and the way are both narrow, as surely as a right line is the shortest way between two points. But there is Divine reason and love in that strait gate. With Divine relentlessness it refuses to allow men to carry through it that which would work their ruin. A guardian angel, and no enemy of human freedom and joy, stands there. It asks for the surrender to God as the only fulfilment of man. For that yielding to the Author of man's being sets free all the nature. The life men live in that way is never narrow or restricted, but the largest and broadest possible. The way leads to life, and it is life. Obedience to God, loyalty to the ideals which Jesus taught, and to the personality which embodied them, do not need some-

thing beyond themselves to reward them and to crown them. They are their own reward, and the life itself is the crown of life. Life is measured by the degree of response to environment, and a man's proper environment is God and all things in God. We find God in Jesus, and to respond to Him by the actual following of His spirit is to be awakened to the meaning and glory of existence. The whole world is made anew for the loyal Christian heart, for the spirit is made alive to Him who sustains the world and all within it. The years can only deepen that life as the Christ who is our life increases in spiritual splendour. The environment enlarges, and with it our life. Such life is the sworn foe of restriction and confinement, yet to walk in that way is never easy. The man who would live according to our Lord's ideals must be under their control. He cannot wander at will into a life void of aspiration. Evil tendencies of the nature must be overcome, and they set the fight for each one. But the struggle gives value to the moral achievement and exhilaration to the heart. Religion which costs nothing, no toil, no anxiety, no tears, will not be worth much, but the faith and hope which spring from the surrender to the highest, remove all irksomeness from the toil and make life one of glad aspiration which is the sure mark of reality.

The great alternative of the hard way and the easy was not an invention of Jesus. It belongs to the nature of things. Eight hundred years before the day of Jesus the Greek writer, Hesiod, in common with moralists of all ages, saw the essential requirement of strenuous effort for every noble path. He says: "Vice may be chosen easily. Smooth is the way, and it lieth very nigh. But in front of Virtue the immortal gods have put sweat. Long and steep is the way to her, and rough at first, but when one cometh to the summit then it is

easy, hard as it was." [1] The way to humility and meekness, to purity of heart and mercifulness, to which Jesus calls, is arduous to a degree beyond all that Hesiod ever imagined ; yet He who summons us to that Christian path is our forerunner and leader in that Way, and in fellowship with His personality the surrender to its claim will be as joyous as the awakening to a spring morning.

[1] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 850–800 B.C. Pythagoras, two centuries later, also makes use of the same picturesque image—the upright stem of innocence, leading straight on in the way of positive virtue, and the divergent track of vice, but according to his diagram, still leading upward. See article on "Proverbs," *D.C.G.* Professor B. W. Bacon says the figure is Pythagorean. Really it is human.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE TEST OF REALITY

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."—MATT. vii. 15–23.

"For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh. And why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"—LUKE vi. 43–46; cf. MATT. xv. 33–35; LUKE xiii. 25–30.

THESE words continue our Lord's effort to secure a sincere practice of Christianity, by a solemn warning against insincerity. He bids His followers beware of those who profess His religion without making any real attempt to enter into its spirit. False prophets, He calls them, wolves masquerading as harmless sheep. The Hebrews were familiar with the species in their history. No product of their religion was so noble as

the prophets, and no product was so worthless and mischievous as those who simulated the zeal, and used the language, without the faithful spirit, of the prophets. The insincere piety of the Pharisees, and the unworthy professors of His own religion, alike come under His condemnation. Ravening wolves, He styles them, and against the havoc they wrought, and which others like them would work in future days, He utters this warning. Let no man be deceived by their plausibilities. Test their character by the outcome of their activity. Censorious judgment is still forbidden both by His word and spirit, but there is nothing virtuous in having spurious coin passed on you. For practical purposes men may be known by their fruits. The *Didache* would bring all teachers of religion to the test: do their teaching and their actual character and influence lead to the increase of righteousness and the knowledge of the Lord? And if those prominent in public and ecclesiastical affairs were estimated by these tests instead of by their conformity or nonconformity to standards of men's own devising, the Church would suffer less from confusion of mind and hindrance in her work. The many controversies respecting the interpretation of the Scriptures; the psychology of their origin; the conflict of ideas regarding the personality of Jesus, the teaching He gave, and the sacrifice He accomplished—may all be brought to the ultimate test of Jesus. The many opinions and shades of opinion respecting evangelicalism or modernism; the rival contentions for Church ritual or for the authority of the Church—which of these brings forth the best fruit, makes the best men, produces the finest social sympathy, the most enduring zeal for the Kingdom of God and man? The older traditions and the newer movements alike are increasingly being estimated, and will finally be approved or condemned,

by that standard. "The ultimate test is the fruitage—grapes and figs, or thistles and thorns? food for human life and happiness, or barren intellectual distinctions and seeds for future controversy?"[1] Jesus affirms that you may argue from the character of the work to the secret spirit of the man, as truly as you argue from the fruit of a tree to the quality and nature of the tree. It is a good tree which brings forth good fruit, and it is a corrupt tree, rotten and poisonous, which brings forth evil fruit. Jesus says "every tree is known by his own fruit." Only confusion is created when the fruit is not in accord with the nature of the tree. And even worse confusion results when the fruit of a human life is contrary to the quality it claims to possess. Let this confusion cease. "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree corrupt and the fruit corrupt." Then you come to honest ground in both cases. No man can be a guide to goodness who is not himself good; or lead others to religious sincerity who is not himself sincerely religious. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" The question answers itself, and the application is equally inevitable. Worthless trees are hewn down and cast into the fire, and as truly the whole purpose of God and the effort of honest men is to destroy from the world all that deceives human souls. Good fruit is the requirement, not so much quantity of service, as quality. Failure in quality diminishes the value of fruit in the orchard. A large quantity of sour, wizened, tasteless apples are a drug on the market and a disgrace to the orchard. So a spirit and character which is unripe, unattractive, humdrum, and commonplace, with no romance or enterprise in it, brings little honour to God, and is of small value to men. The spirit of Jesus will not only save a man from violation of the Ten Commandments,

[1] Buckman, article on "Modernism," *Hibbert Journal*, Jan. 1923.

but will also impart itself to his nature, making it genial, sympathetic, attractive. And in truth, men really enter into the Kingdom of Christ in proportion to their entrance into the spirit of it, their appropriation of its inner quality. And so the transition is not abrupt, but natural, when Jesus goes on to say, "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." The will of God was made manifest in the teaching of Christ, and illustrated in the whole spirit of His life. The Sermon on the Mount is a most convincing declaration of that will. And we cannot doubt that the knowledge that He had surely revealed in that teaching the inmost purpose of the Heavenly Father gave that decisive and certain character to His universal arraignment of the human spirit, and evoked that emphasis upon His own teaching and personality which we find so deeply right. Jesus was thinking first of qualification for entrance into the spiritual order of which He was the Leader and Lord—the fellowship of the faithful servants of God, in this life. But the thought passes on to the certain testing of that earthly obedience. "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess and say unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." The words undoubtedly strike a new note. Jesus has not before in the Sermon claimed this high prerogative as the Judge of men. On the strength of the fact, the passage is placed to the credit of Jewish apocalyptic expectation, either as shared by Jesus, or added by the Gospel writer. Others maintain that they are words of Jesus, but belong to a later period in His life than the Sermon. Yet they are

no more than a fuller development of that essential moral authority which placed itself above all that men of olden time had said. Also they make it so plain that the indispensable condition to any true entrance to the Kingdom is ethical faithfulness, that no apocalyptic Kingdom into which all Jewish people will indiscriminately share can possibly be in question. Jesus declares that the ultimate approval or reprobation of all men will be determined by their actual relation to Himself and His teaching. Between Himself and His teaching He allows no separation. Faith and Love to Himself are only valid when they bring forth the right life which He made so unmistakable. One of the deepest causes of dismay to His spirit was that men called Him Lord, without doing the things which He said. And, therefore, in "that day," so impressively and mysteriously shadowed forth, the question of destiny will be the doing or not doing of the will. According to the whole current of the life, as it sets towards obedience or towards non-obedience, will men be owned or disowned by Him. That Judgment Day will come whenever men are confronted with the reality of themselves. To be known of Him is to be numbered with Him in the love of the Father. To be not known of Him is to be numbered among those who have fellowship with the things of darkness. Amid all the myriad varieties of moral condition, the numberless degrees of integrity or of turpitude, no other classification is possible when we come to reality. Iniquity is in-equity. The equity which Jesus asks, in this Sermon, is not some mysterious virtue far removed from men's daily business and bosoms, but that which is right, straight and fair towards men, frank and honourable towards God. Knowing this, could the Lord of Truth be less impassioned in enforcing it ?

The words used by Matthew and by Luke are *ἀνομία*, and *ἀδικία*, both translated "iniquity." The rejected ones, according to Matthew, substitute, instead of genuine goodness, a claim to have done the works of an apostle. According to Luke they rest their claim on their former intimacy with Jesus, their fellow-citizenship with Him. Professor Bacon maintains that by *ἀνομία* Matthew means lawlessness in the strict Jewish sense, and that by *ἀδικία* Luke takes a broader and more social view of their offence. But Matthew's righteousness is in harmony with the whole Sermon, where Jesus means by it righteousness as He has illuminated it, which consists largely in social rightness and sympathy. Rightness towards God and towards man are never separated in either version of the Sermon, as they never were by the Master whose words they record.

The people to whom Jesus spoke had experience of men eminent in their religious system, zealous beyond measure for the letter of the Law, yet inwardly evil. Our Lord remembered the tendency to put words instead of works, and ceremonial works instead of inward truth, and looking into the future He contemplated those who would use the preaching of His gospel, and works of healing and exorcism in His name as substitutes for the forthright doing of His will.[1] Later history and

[1] Healings wrought by the name of Jesus in the Early Church are testified to in the New Testament as a normal action of Holy Power, according with the will of God (1 Cor. xii. 9–10; Acts iii. 6–8, vi. 8, xiv. 8; Heb. ii. 4). Exorcisms were not unknown to the Jews or, at least, the claim to them (Luke xi. 19–20; Matt. ix. 38). Jesus does not deny the reality of these powers, nor the validity of His name when so used. Later on similar works were done by the use of His name as a magic formula, on the lines of other psychical action familiar to all. The failure of the invocation is also recorded (Acts xix. 13 ff.). The psychical affinity in all these manifestations is unquestionable, and the transition from the true, unselfish, and spiritual use of the name to its use by impostors who may have possessed that peculiar "sensitive-

experience combine to show that great gifts of mind, and conspicuous powers of personality, subconscious or otherwise, may exist alongside with dark evil in the heart and life. Men have guided others to noble paths and yet been themselves cursed by secret vileness. In the *Inferno*, Dante found, among those suffering retribution on foul, licentious sin, one who had been a guide and teacher to himself in Florence. Like the rest in that gulf of shame, this man was so defaced by his sin that he was only recognizable by his voice. Dante bent a fearful face towards him and hoarsely whispered, "Are you here, Ser Brunetto?" This Brunetto was a famous scholar and author who had discussed with great power the high matters of theology and ethics, and had specialized in the study of the virtues and vices. Dante confesses a great debt to him:

> "Well fastened in my memory 'tis, and now
> Goes to my heart, thy dear paternal image,
> When, hourly in the world of life, you taught me
> How man may rise unto eternal things." [1]

Not altogether, even in these depths of horror, was this man bereft of power to discern the way of truth. He can still urge Dante to follow the star of his poetic genius, and to cleanse himself from the evil ways of the Florentines. Yet there he was, banished from human nature by foul sin. Many others were there in the same retribution, clergy, scholars, men of high renown, defiled and defaced by the working of iniquity. And when

ness" which modern psychology recognizes, is easy. The Charismata of the Early Church were much sought after by those least spiritual. The example of Simon Magus and the vain Corinthians may be instanced (Acts viii. 9–24; 1 Cor. xii. 14). The prophesying spoken of may have no connection with these "gifts," the word being elastic enough to apply to any form of testifying.

[1] *Inferno*, xv.

we remember that Dante tells us that all he depicts in these realms of shame represented first of all the things that happen in human experience on the earth, his pungent lines reinforce our Lord's solemn warning.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE HOUSE OF LIFE

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."—MATT. vii. 24–27.

"Whosoever cometh to Me, and heareth My sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: he is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great."—LUKE vi. 47–49.

THE difference between these two builders was one of foundation. The wise man's house was built on a rock, the foolish man's on nothing. St. Luke's version enlarges this critical concern. The wise man "digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock." The unwise thought anywhere, anyhow, would do. "Without a foundation he built his house on the earth." And when the rainy season came, the time of storm and flood, the wise builder was vindicated in the house that stood, while the foolish builder was put to shame and loss in the house that fell.

The poet and painter, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, wrote a number of powerful sonnets bearing on the desires and affections which men cherish; the noble things

they attempt, the ignoble paths they tread; all that determines a man's value and destiny. He calls these completed poems *The House of Life*. He reveals the House, which is ourself, in which we have to live, in which no other man can live. We have no option about building. Consciously or unconsciously, for better or worse, men have to be the builders of their own character. A man's experience may be very simple to all seeming, but his life's House is complex, with many chambers, some very secret, and winding corridors. Many thoughts, varied ideas and actions, go to make it beautiful or unsightly, stable or unstable. And the Lord of Life makes it plain that all the strength and beauty depends upon the practising of those principles which He made so impressive. "Whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, is like a wise man who built his house on a rock." Good intentions, earnest faith, reveal their reality and make personal character strong so far as they incorporate the spirit of these sayings in conduct. To fail in this, to neglect it, still more to despise it, loosens the whole fabric of the life, and leaves it without foundation.

Our Lord does not insist on this so stringently because He lacks sympathy with human frailty, or with the earnest struggle that fails, but because He is dealing with the facts of life. Things which are not cannot be counted. The earnest effort which fails will not be all lost. It will ultimately count in the character more than many "low successes."

> "What I aspired to be,
> And was not, comforts me.
> . . . . .
> All I could never be,
> All, men ignored in me,
> That I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped."[1]

[1] Browning, "Rabbi ben Ezra."

Yet so far as the effort fails, it does not strengthen the foundation of the House of Life. It cannot count as strength of manhood until it succeeds.

The power to understand and interpret the great words of truth is to be highly valued, but it only makes security of life when it gets the teaching done. The wise man hears and does, the foolish man only hears. The one allows mental action to suffice, the other goes on to confirm his understanding by practice. Luke adds a word of great value: "Whosoever cometh unto Me, and heareth My sayings." He comes into a personal relation with the Speaker which makes the effective hearing of the teaching. The other dispenses with this, and the heart and will are left unaffected, the hearing and the understanding are both sterilized. The personal approach is essential.

The rock on which a man's life is built who hears His sayings and doeth them, is the reality of Christian experience, which involves a personal intimacy with the Lord Christ, making the doing possible. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." He is the Alpha and the Omega of the whole process, but without the personal doing of His will, nothing is possible. "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, you also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house." The virtue rises from the foundation through every stone of the building. "He that comes unto Me, and hears My sayings, and does them." A unity in trinity, a trinity in unity.

The same combination and distinction is essential in all human affairs. The one thing needful for the restoration and peace of a broken world is that men and nations shall come, and hear, and do. In 1914, what we call human civilization was overtaken by humiliation and catastrophe. Europe was rent asunder. The many

ties of mutual interest and common good which we fondly hoped were binding together the nations of the earth, were brutally shattered. The spirit of humanity was staggered. Men asked then, and are still asking, how such a horror could be possible? The broad, human answer is that the war was possible because the civilization in which we trusted was not rightly established on principles of truth. The lasting foundation for peace had never been well and truly laid in the life of men and nations. In every land, thousands on thousands of faithful souls had reared their own House of Life on the sure truth of Christ, and they stood in strength and beauty to the glory of Him who had redeemed them. They promised nobler days for man. But in the ground-structure of society, in the whole system of civilization, great breaches were only too visible. And beneath this precarious peace, a seething mass of diabolism had for more than a generation been concentrating. When we recall how Christian principle was widely regarded as unreasonable, as of no account in business and politics; how the Sermon on the Mount was by many smilingly set aside as quite impracticable in a world like this, and by many more derided in the name of a superior enlightenment; what was that but a deep chasm split in the foundations of the race?

Now is the day of reparations. The ancient call becomes modern: "Thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in" (Isa. lviii. 12). We can imagine Jesus discovering these words in the old Hebrew rolls, and reading them until He could scarcely contain Himself. Burns, we are told, could never read Isaiah without tears. And Jesus would endorse every word as right to the will of God and the human need, and would discern more clearly

than ever that the one necessity was the faithful and enthusiastic practising of the religion in social service and in the honouring of God (vers. 1–9). The task is still for to-day. It will require the united labour of all Christendom. Every noble activity may have its share in it. Science and Art, Music and Poetry, Education and Commerce, Capital and Labour, Church and Parliament may seek to unify the race by common ideals of mutual service and willing sacrifice. They may follow after these as they are expressed and illustrated by Him who knew their victorious power, once they are established in the heart of man. True it is that complete fidelity to these ideals will not be secured until the whole level of life is raised, but that is no reason for any man's slackness. A genuine approach to these principles can be made without delay, for they are native to the human instinct itself. "The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." The glory of the ideal begins to appear when men live in humility and meekness, in mercy and peacemaking, hungering and thirsting after righteousness and that purity of heart in which they see God. The individual contribution to the raising of the level of humanity is beyond price.

When we realize these noble utterances of Jesus in their depth and height, all centring in the Golden Principle of doing unto others, saying about others, wishing and seeking for others, as we would they should do unto ourselves, is there one line we would blot, one note of all the majestic harmony we would suppress? Not if we are able to discern human sanity and Divine wisdom in one vital combination. Not if we have ears to catch the music of the spheres as they chime in joyful response to this religion, which is "one with the blowing clover and the falling rain," and one with the Holiest

in the Height. Seek the broad humanity of this faith and hope, understand its trust in God and in man, feel the swing and sweep of its adventurous spirit, surrender will and imagination to the enthusiasm which inspires it, and the glory of the Christian ideal will expand to the vision. A noble character will be fashioned which is its own best security. The House of our Life will be firmly established, in the strength of a spirit made one with God, will rise before the eyes of God and of man, in stability which no earthly storm can destroy, in beauty and dignity which shall glorify the Master Builder. Wisdom hews out its seven pillars to stand in social strength and manifold excellence. Its firm and ample base is laid in fair colours and in sapphires. Its windows, which open on to the broad plains of life and towards the brooding heavens, are of agates. The gates which shut out the unclean are of carbuncles, and all its walls of pleasant stones. Each noble House of Life, not made with hands, stands as part of that Holy City where all our best dreams come true, part of the New Humanity of which the ever-living Christ is the Saviour and the Head.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE AUTHORITY OF THE SERMON: EPILOGUE

"When Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."—MATT. vii. 28–29.

THEY hear aright the singing tones of poetry who are touched with its fairy wing. They find communion with the ascended mind of Jesus who have the heart for the heights. Lacking desire or will for the unattained, timidity and propriety will only be scandalized by the flight of a Divinely animated spirit. We shall neither be able to conceive a new world ourselves, nor to trust His conceptions. His voice has no authority until the spirit of the Mount moves the sullen waters of our soul.

Simple men who gathered round Him with earnest desire for the better day for their country and the world, listened to Him as He spoke of God, and man, and life; and amid all that was difficult to interpret and to adjust to their need and circumstance, they did not fail to catch the sure accent of personal knowledge in the Speaker, fresh and original vision, sincerity, reality, passion. They were sure He knew God and man, saw the truth and spoke it in holy love. And so it ever is, that those who have the heart for the ascent with Jesus acknowledge His eternal authority.

"Whoso has felt the Spirit of the Highest
Cannot confound, nor doubt Him, nor deny;
Yea, though, O World, thou with one voice deniest,
Stand thou on that side, for on this am I."[1]

[1] Myers, "St. Paul."

The whole future of mankind depends upon this elevation of spirit. "Make no more giants," Browning exclaims, "elevate the race at once." We are suffering from little-mindedness. We have far too much blame for human stumbling and failure, and too little censure for the feeble safe lives that make no moral venture. Elevation of mind, largeness of outlook, carry men far beyond escape from manifest sin. A low, dull mind, a listless spirit, is the worst sin of all. Uplift men's ideas, and these will vanquish their sins, and open up a new world of human virtue. The aspiring spirit transcends the bounds of the customary and conventional. Conceptions are enlarged until they break into blossom; horizons of faith open on the distances of the Divine purpose; new hopes for men and nations dawn upon our spirit; the ideals of Jesus become real to our heart. Match the height of Jesus with a human heart for the height, and what we now call impossible will be possible and imperative. Instead of a lasting peace being inconceivable, nothing else will be thinkable. Let the Sermon on the Mount capture the imagination of the multitudes of all nations, and the race will be above engaging in the barbarities of human slaughter. Such men as shall then arise will not consent to be the tools of selfish ambition. The New Man, the man of meekness and mercy, the man of truth and vision, shall possess the earth. And, happily, signs of this advent are not wanting. They multiply. Even cruel war liberates them from bondage. They rise, they stand upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Lift up your hearts. Your redemption draweth nigh. They shall come, the sons of the height, the children of the morning glory, the brothers of Jesus.

Sursum corda

THY GOD REIGNETH

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